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General Assembly

Sixty-third session

Official Records

6th plenary meeting
Tuesday, 23 September 2008, 3 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. D'Escoto Brockmann ..... (Nicaragua)

The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Address by Ms. Tarja Halonen, President of the Republic of Finland

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Finland.

Ms. Tarja Halonen, President of the Republic of Finland, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations Her Excellency Ms. Tarja Halonen, President of the Republic of Finland, and to invite her to address the Assembly.

President Halonen: Let me first congratulate you, Sir, on your election to preside over the sixty-third session of the General Assembly. We express our full support for your presidency. I also thank the Secretary-General for his resolute efforts to promote the United Nations and its values.

Finland aligns itself with the statement of the European Union.

Our world is facing unforeseen challenges, such as climate change and the food crisis. The current economic turmoil also requires decisive action. At the same time, we have not been able to rid ourselves of conventional crisis. Unfortunately, armed conflicts are still a reality all over the world. Too often, we — the international community — are unable to agree on a common response. Too often, people affected by poverty and conflicts are let down.

The need to adapt the international architecture to these challenges is deeper than ever. We need an efficient United Nations to find common solutions for our future. The United Nations represents collective security in its most global form. Finland is committed to building a more secure, fair and just world through a reformed and credible United Nations.

I had the pleasure earlier this week of presenting to the Secretary-General the final report of the Helsinki Process on Globalization and Democracy. The main political message of this joint initiative of Finland and the United Republic of Tanzania is that some of the challenges posed by globalization can be solved only through multi-stakeholder dialogue, and that the United Nations could play an important role in facilitating and developing new practices for such cooperation.

Climate change must be addressed with vigour. Otherwise, it can wipe out our achievements in the field of sustainable development and even bring into question the whole future of mankind. Recent extreme weather phenomena can be a serious indication of the challenges we are about to face. Multilateral engagement and shared responsibility are the only effective means to tackle this global menace. Others' indifference is no excuse for inaction. Climate change is a matter of our responsibility to future generations. There is no place for petty politics or recrimination.

The United Nations has to play a leading role in the global response to climate change. We must reach a

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comprehensive global agreement on a new international climate regime. The Copenhagen Climate Change Conference will take place in December next year. It is evident that global commitments need to be implemented and also supplemented by national and regional action. It is important to include all stakeholders, from non-governmental organizations to private enterprises, and from individual citizens to Governments. We need everybody; it is necessary that women too can participate fully in this work.

Industrialized countries have to bear their share in mitigating climate change. However, international negotiations on the new climate regime cannot succeed without extensive participation by the developing countries. We must actively support the most vulnerable developing countries in adapting to and combating climate change.

There is mounting evidence that poverty, especially in rural areas, can be reduced by sustainable management of natural resources. Forests are crucial in reducing greenhouse gases. Finland has a long history of sustainable forest management, and we understand its impact on rural development and employment. We would like the United Nations to intensify its efforts to assist Governments and communities to improve their capacities for rural development and sustainable forest management. We are of course ready to work with others in this respect.

I am pleased to be a co-host, together with the President of Liberia, Ms. Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, my friend, of the International Colloquium on Women's Empowerment, to be held in Liberia next March. The conference will address women's role in climate change, security, governance and leadership.

Rising food prices are a challenge with worldwide consequences. Once again the poorest and the most vulnerable — women and children — suffer the most. Food shortages lead to deterioration of diets, and can provoke social unrest. Effective Government action and improved donor coordination are crucial in tackling the food crisis. The United Nations Comprehensive Framework for Action is an excellent initiative in addressing this global challenge.

Parallel to the short-term response, attention must be paid to medium- and long-term policies in enhancing food security. Support for the rural sector is crucial for sustainable and equitable development, growth and well-being. Moreover, the promotion of good agricultural practices is among the best approaches to adaptation to climate change.

This food issue can also provide opportunities. If developing countries are supported in the spirit of the Aid for Trade agenda, they can better take advantage of their agricultural potential, including exporting. And we need to ensure, again, that both women and men benefit from support, keeping in mind that women produce most of the food in many developing countries.

The United Nations currently deploys well over 100,000 military and civilian personnel in peacekeeping operations. This is a remarkable figure, and we, the Member States, must continue to support the United Nations efforts in this field. The United Nations and regional organizations should work closer together in carrying the burden in preventing and resolving conflicts.

Increased cooperation should be extended to the African Union. We already have good cooperation and experience in our own region, because improving efficiency and improving cooperation between the European Union and the United Nations remain a top priority. In Kosovo, and most recently also in Georgia, we continue close cooperation between the United Nations, the European Union and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe.

That is why I also dare to say that increased cooperation should be extended to the African Union. A continued United Nations peacekeeping presence in Chad and in the Central African Republic would contribute to wider stabilization efforts, both locally and regionally.

Tackling today's multifold conflicts requires a comprehensive approach to security. Trade, development policy and humanitarian aid need to be utilized alongside traditional crisis management tools. We must — even better than today — take women and children into account in conflicts and post-conflict peacebuilding.

We have made good decisions. We have to make them become reality. I am pleased to inform the Assembly that last Friday Finland published a national action plan on implementing Security Council resolution 1325 (2000). We hope that more and more member countries will do the same.

Furthermore, there can be no sustainable peace without justice. Finland strongly supports the International Criminal Court in rejecting impunity for the most serious international crimes.

Finally, I want to share my memories and experience. I had the privilege to co-preside over the Millennium Summit with President Sam Nujoma of Namibia eight years ago. We witnessed leaders having the spirit and the courage to adopt the Millennium Declaration and to make a commitment on the Millennium Development Goals. It is our duty to fulfil these commitments. Africa requires our devoted attention and support, as was agreed yesterday. Let us work for it, because today, in this Hall, it is once again time to pledge our joint commitment to the ideas and values of the United Nations.

Everyone present may remember what the Charter calls us to do: "to unite our strength to maintain international peace and security". While the concept of security has changed and become broader, the onus is on us to follow this call of the Charter and translate it into action.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Finland for the statement she has just made.

Ms. Tarja Halonen, President of the Republic of Finland, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Haris Silajdžić, Chairman of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the Chairman of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Mr. Haris Silajdžić, Chairman of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Haris Silajdžić, Chairman of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Silajdžić: It is an honour to address the General Assembly at its sixty-third session.

Allow me to express my gratitude to Mr. Srgjan Kerim, who ably presided over the Assembly during the preceding year, and to congratulate you, Father Miguel d'Escoto Brockmann, the new President of the General Assembly. I also thank you, Sir, for an inspiring appeal for respect for basic, universal ethical values.

The first time I stood at this rostrum was in May 1992, as the Foreign Minister of a newly independent Bosnia and Herzegovina. At that time, I recounted the unspeakable atrocities that were unfolding in my country. I also warned that, if not stopped, such atrocities would only get worse. In fact, I merely asked that Bosnia and Herzegovina be accorded the right to defend itself, the right guaranteed by the Charter.

We know what has happened since. Some in the international community insisted on maintaining the arms embargo imposed by the Security Council in 1991, thus adding to the obviously overwhelming military advantage of Milosevic's regime, which was bent on destroying Bosnia and Herzegovina and its people. They justified this course by claiming that lifting the arms embargo meant adding oil to the fire. The result was that the fire was quelled with the blood of the innocent.

According to International Committee of the Red Cross data, 200,000 people — 12,000 of them children — were killed, up to 50,000 women were raped, and 2.2 million people were forced to flee their homes. This was a veritable genocide and sociocide. The intent of the perpetrators of this genocide was to forever destroy the unique multi-ethnic fabric of Bosnia and Herzegovina through mass slaughter, rape, torture, abuse, expulsion and plunder. In spite of this, defenders of our country conducted themselves honourably, as demonstrated by the acquittal by the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia of most of Bosnia and Herzegovina's military leadership.

All this culminated in Srebrenica in July 1995. The International Court of Justice — the court of this Organization — ruled in its Judgment of 26 February 2007 that "the Bosnian Serbs devised and implemented a plan to execute as many as possible of the military aged Bosnian Muslim men present in the enclave" (*para. 292*) and that

> "the acts committed at Srebrenica ... were committed with the specific intent to destroy in

> part the group of the Muslims of Bosnia and Herzegovina as such; and accordingly ... these were acts of genocide, committed by members of the [Army of Republika Srpska] in and around Srebrenica from about 13 July 1995." (*para. 297*)

Through its acts and omissions, the United Nations, by its own admission, bears part of the responsibility for the crimes committed at Srebrenica. In fact, the Secretary-General's 1999 report on Srebrenica unequivocally states:

> "Through error, misjudgement and an inability to recognize the scope of the evil confronting us, we failed to do our part to help save the people of Srebrenica from the Serb campaign of mass murder ... Srebrenica crystallized a truth understood only too late by the United Nations and the world at large: that Bosnia was as much a moral cause as a military conflict. The tragedy of Srebrenica will haunt our history forever." (*A/54/549, para. 503*)

We do not want the United Nations to be haunted. This Organization's credibility is too important to the world to carry the burden of this failure. Errors can be committed, but errors must not be repeated. We want the United Nations to right the wrongs. In fact, international law mandates that this must be done. The International Law Commission's articles on State responsibility for internationally wrongful acts, adopted in resolution 56/83 of 12 December 2001, mandate that "No State shall recognize as lawful a situation created by a serious breach [of a peremptory norm of general international law]", which clearly includes the crime of genocide and crimes against humanity, "nor render aid or assistance in maintaining that situation" (*article 41*).

If those principles had been applied, would the institutions identified by the International Court of Justice as perpetrators of genocide still exist? Would vast portions of a country remain ethnically clean? Would over a million refugees and displaced persons remain outside their homes? In short, do these principles allow for the arrest of Karadzic and the simultaneous preservation of the results of his project? In fact, just today The Hague Tribunal announced a revised indictment against Karadzic that charges him with genocide and crimes against humanity, against both Bosnians and Croats in 27 municipalities in Bosnia and Herzegovina. This process will further implicate the Milosevic regime in the planning and commission of those crimes.

We cannot bring back the dead, but we can give dignity and justice to the survivors. What we say today is aimed not at the past, but at the future, and not only for Bosnia and Herzegovina. We owe it to not only the victims and survivors, but humanity as a whole. The message to the would-be perpetrators of crimes in the name of a twisted ideology should be crystal-clear: do not even think about it; your terror will not pay off. That should be the message.

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, we had the opportunity to make that true by a consistent implementation of the 1995 Dayton Peace Agreement, which ended the aggression, stopped the genocide, and brought peace. These were its major accomplishments, and their value cannot be overemphasized.

The Dayton Peace Agreement, however, was also intended to reverse the effects of genocide and ethnic cleansing. It had all the necessary elements to do so. Instead, in the words of the Constitutional Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina, its main provisions have been a victim of:

> "a systemic, continuing and deliberate practice of the public authorities of Republika Srpska with the goal of preventing the so-called minority returns, either through direct participation in violent incidents or through the abdication of responsibility to protect the people from ... violent attacks due solely to their ethnic background".

Dayton never intended such ethnic apartheid to take root in Bosnia and Herzegovina. It is not the implementation of the Dayton Peace Agreement, but the violation of its core principles, that led to this result. It would be a grave mistake to recognize this result as lawful and legitimate. It is the responsibility of this Organization to make it right. Just as we should not have been forced to smuggle arms into our own country to defend ourselves, we should not be forced now to smuggle basic human rights, justice and democracy into Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Without righting this wrong can we genuinely celebrate the sixtieth anniversary of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights this December? Moreover, can we celebrate the sixtieth anniversary of the adoption of the Convention on the

Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide if the first and only Judgment of the International Court of Justice on the crime of genocide remains in the Court's archives?

Now is the time to right these wrongs. We are about to start work on the new Constitution of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the outcome of that process will answer many of these questions.

To those who now seek to legitimize the systemic violations of the Dayton Peace Agreement, we all must say: make no mistake, genocide will not be rewarded. That is the responsibility of this Organization. Rewarding genocide would send a dangerous message throughout the world, and would surely undermine the chances of peace and stability in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the region.

Seekers of justice are not the enemies of peace. They are the guardians of peace. As the Secretary-General said today, justice is the pillar of peace and stability. That is what this statement is all about. Certainly, there are those in Bosnia and Herzegovina who would not agree, but they are surely not the victims of genocide.

We have not forgotten the help we received from many of the countries represented here today, a number of whose soldiers, diplomats, aid workers and journalists died in Bosnia and Herzegovina while working to end the aggression, bring peace and ease the suffering, or to make sure that the rest of the world knew about it. For that we thank them once again, and renew our sympathy to their families.

An even greater number of countries have assisted us in rebuilding our society after the aggression, and we extend our heartfelt gratitude for that as well. Bosnia and Herzegovina still needs help in this regard, and we hope that we can work together in order to ensure permanent peace and stability in my country, the region and the world.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Chairman of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Haris Silajdžić, Chairman of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Paul Kagame, President of the Republic of Rwanda

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Rwanda.

Mr. Paul Kagame, President of the Republic of Rwanda, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Paul Kagame, President of the Republic of Rwanda, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Kagame: We are gathered here once again to reflect on major national, regional and global challenges — and on how together, as the United Nations, we can renew our commitment to finding solutions. It gives me great pleasure to share with the General Assembly some insights on how some of those global developments affect Rwanda, as well as our region, as we continue to strengthen our social, economic and democratic institutions for improving the lives of our citizens.

In the context of fighting poverty and achieving the Millennium Development Goals, our second-generation poverty-reduction strategy is gathering momentum in Africa, East Africa and Rwanda, and is being implemented in the context of greater stability and peace. In Rwanda we are registering a healthy economic growth rate, which is currently averaging 7 per cent annually, in an increasingly open and conducive environment that encourages domestic and foreign investors. We also continue to deepen our regional integration in the East African community. That is essential for a bigger and more dynamic market, which should become a far more effective and efficient gateway to global business.

With regard to empowering women and promoting their socio-economic and political participation, we continue to make significant progress. In the just-concluded Rwandan parliamentary elections for the lower chamber, women candidates performed exceptionally well, increasing their presence in the new Parliament from 49 to 55 seats. We believe that, besides improving gender status in our country, that marks healthy progress towards realizing a vision of a united, democratic and prosperous Rwanda.

Allow me to raise another issue that may have wider implications, namely, that of justice and, more specifically, of universal jurisdiction and its abuse. It is important that those who consider themselves powerful nations do not misuse that tool of international justice to extend their laws and jurisdiction over those they perceive to be weaker countries. If unchecked, one can only imagine the legal chaos that would ensue should any judge in any country decide to apply local laws to other sovereign States. The United Nations has a duty to ensure that universal jurisdiction serves its original goals of delivering international justice and fairness, as opposed to abuse.

There is no doubt that climate change is among the critical challenges of our time. Africa is being gravely affected. Deserts and dry zones continue to claim more territory. Over-reliance on wood for energy by our populations is leading to severe deforestation. Furthermore, unpredictable weather and rainfall patterns, combined with limited scientific and technological capacities, are already undermining our continent's ability to effectively manage water resources.

We take those challenges very seriously in Rwanda. Earlier this month, in Kigali, the Africa Climate Change Forum brought together policymakers, business leaders and academic and scientific communities from different parts of the world. They reaffirmed that the world community urgently needs to think globally, but also to act locally, in translating resolutions into actions. Towards that end, we are determined to intensify efforts in the areas of reforestation, terracing and irrigation for more effective use of water and land resources, as well as to prevent soil erosion. It is indispensable that we partner together as a global community to urgently act to protect our planet in the context of the Convention on Climate Change and the Kyoto Protocol.

Rwanda is committed to regional and global peace and stability. Let us not forget that the process of comprehensively resolving the issue of those who committed genocide in Rwanda has yet to be completed. We stand ready to play our part in addressing that matter in the context of broader objectives to consolidate stability and peace on our continent. Once again, I assure the Assembly of our determination and commitment to creating a safer and better world.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Rwanda for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Paul Kagame, President of the Republic of Rwanda, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Valdas Adamkus, President of the Republic of Lithuania

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Lithuania.

Mr. Valdas Adamkus, President of the Republic of Lithuania, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Valdas Adamkus, President of the Republic of Lithuania, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Adamkus: First, I would like to express my great respect to the leadership of the General Assembly as it guides the Organization through global issues and challenges.

When I stood at this podium 10 years ago, the list of issues to be urgently addressed was about the same, yet the mood was different. The Kyoto Protocol had just been signed and preparations for the Millennium Summit, including the drafting of the Millennium Development Goals, were under way. The international community, guided by the principles and the leadership of the United Nations, showed the will and the ambition to resolve global issues.

But did we manage to turn that collective will into principled and decisive actions? I have to admit that many nations, big and small, have many more concerns today than they did a decade ago. Today we feel less secure. The very structure of the international system seems to be fracturing, depriving us of the protection provided by international law and international institutions. In my region, in Eastern Europe and in the eastern neighbourhood of the European Union (EU), that is more obvious than anywhere else.

Take energy security: oil supplies to Lithuania have been cut off without warning, and we do not stand a chance of conducting a normal civilized dialogue on how to fix the problem. Gas supplies were interrupted to our neighbours Ukraine and Belarus. In that light, and on the eve of closing down our only independent power generator, we have very serious reason to worry about the possible risks for the future of our economy. I would also say that other countries of our region also have concerns about unreliable energy supplies. Such a situation threatens the stability of the entire region. The United Nations cannot be a mere passive observer if, and when, universal values and international law are under threat. Too often, we remain observers in the face of mounting security crises.

What happened to Georgia a few months ago is a case in point. The United Nations largely failed to react to an act of aggression against a small nation that has been a Member of the United Nations since 1992. Perhaps we failed to react because one of the interested sides to the conflict is a permanent member of the Security Council, which has the responsibility to protect both the letter and the spirit of the Charter of the United Nations and various United Nations resolutions.

But maybe we also failed to react because our faith in the United Nations has weakened. It is the very essence of the Organization's mission to protect human life and human rights, but too often voting on human rights receives less and less support from Member States. Today, there are still about 26 million internally displaced persons in the world, including in the Sudan, Somalia, the South Caucasus nations of Georgia and Azerbaijan, and other places. Last year alone, we faced serious crises in different corners of the planet, including in Myanmar, the Sudan and Zimbabwe. The world needed United Nations leadership, but the Organization has not acted accordingly. That is because some States hide behind technicalities or the shield of national sovereignty, thereby paralysing the United Nations.

It is quite evident that the United Nations cannot continue with business as usual. It needs reform and a greater role in areas that will determine the future of the twenty-first century, such as energy, information security, anti-terrorism, the fight against fundamentalism and the like. How long will we continue with cold-war-era security definitions, closing our eyes to the less visible, but no less dangerous dangers of the twenty-first century? When 17 years ago, following the Soviet occupation, my country regained independence and joined the United Nations, we were told that never again would Molotovs and Ribbentrops dare to decide the future of other nations. Next year we will mark the seventieth anniversary of the shameful Molotov-Ribbentrop secret protocols.

But Lithuania and other nations of the former Soviet Union still have to fight against the revisionism seeping down from the Kremlin's towers and the blatant claims that there was no occupation of the Baltic States and that there was no Holodomor in Ukraine, where millions of people were starved to death by a ruthless dictator. Should not an alarm bell ring across the entire international community when we see such bold attempts to cover up crimes against humanity?

Today, my nation is commemorating the Day of Genocide of Lithuanian Jews. That tragedy is a powerful reminder to us all of the vulnerability of freedom, but it also teaches us that sincere efforts to admit one's crimes help nations to reconcile and create a truly peaceful, secure and stable area. Therefore, on this solemn day we not only remember but we also learn.

If we are to reform the United Nations in a meaningful way, perhaps we should have a better look at the experience of European nations after the end of the Second World War and the end of the cold war. Based on that experience, it is obvious that we need to strengthen democracy at home in order to have good governance and responsible leadership. Perhaps responsible leaders will not protect us from all global challenges, but they will at least seek cooperation with their people and other nations to resolve their persisting problems.

It is only through integration that truly indivisible security can be achieved. Indivisible security has special meaning and importance for smaller nations, which have all too often fallen victim to the redrawing of maps. It is my conviction that the interaction of, and cooperation among, different organizations — like the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, EU, NATO and the Council of Europe — have been, and should remain, the foundation for security and stability in Europe. There are difficulties and deficiencies; but there is no alternative, and new alternatives are not needed. I am therefore deeply

worried by new calls to revise the institutional structure of European security, rather than to abide by commitments undertaken before the whole international community.

Security based on cooperation should remain the basic principle of different European organizations and of international relations as a whole. The philosophy of the balance of power, which is again growing popular in some capitals, has no place in contemporary Europe. And because security is indivisible, it is in the interest of the international community that the United Nations should play a greater role in strengthening preventive diplomacy and making the principle of the responsibility to protect work.

The United Nations also has to be more responsive to emerging threats, such as unreliable energy supplies, fundamentalism and cyber attacks. It does not matter if the world is unipolar, bipolar or multipolar. Human life and human rights remain at the heart of our world. Only such a world can create a truly viable architecture among States — an architecture based on trust, openness and respect for human rights. But did we see efforts to create such an architecture in the Georgia-Russia conflict? What we saw instead were renewed attempts to divide the world into zones of influence or privileged interests. That should be unacceptable to the international community in the twenty-first century. Division and exclusion are bad remedies for conflict resolution. Conflict resolution in South Ossetia, Abkhazia and elsewhere should therefore be the responsibility of the international community and international institutions, not of one participating side, which hardly remains impartial.

We also have to maintain commitments to value-based policies. It is through our commitment to change and reform that Lithuania has become what it is today: a consolidated democracy, a strong reformed economy and an active contributor to international peacekeeping missions from the Balkans to Afghanistan.

I believe that we, the peoples of the United Nations, have to renew our commitment to universal values and principles, so that we march together and in the same direction and our steps become stronger. I believe that we must learn those lessons well, so that in another 10-years' time we can celebrate not only the fulfilled promise of the Millennium Development Goals but also the fulfilled promise of creating lasting peace and an era of progress, prosperity and human integrity. It is because the United Nations consists primarily not of the sum total of votes but of universal principles that those principles shall be a guiding light for us in the years to come. I still believe that that is the core mission of the Organization. I care deeply about it.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Lithuania for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Valdas Adamkus, President of the Republic of Lithuania, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, President of the Islamic Republic of Iran

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Mr. Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, President of the Islamic Republic of Iran, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, President of the Islamic Republic of Iran, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Ahmadinejad (*spoke in Farsi; English text provided by the delegation*): I am grateful to the Almighty for granting me another opportunity to be present at this world Assembly. In the past three years, I have talked to the Assembly about great hopes in the bright future of human society and about some solutions for achieving sustainable peace and expanding love, compassion and cooperation. I have also talked about unjust systems governing the world; pressures exerted by some Powers seeking to trample the rights of other nations; oppression imposed on the majority of the global community, especially on the peoples of Iraq, Palestine, Lebanon, Africa, Latin America and Asia; about challenges we are faced with, such as efforts to shatter the sanctity of families, destroy cultures, humiliate lofty values, neglect commitments and expand the shadow of threats; as well as about the arms race and the unfairness and inability of the systems governing world affairs to reform the status quo.

With the emergence of various new developments, the debility of existing mechanisms has been revealed even more starkly. However, at the same time an encouraging trend, originating in the thoughts and beliefs of peoples, has blossomed and become stronger. Against the backdrop of the despair caused by the new developments, that trend has ignited a glimmer of hope in the hearts of men for a brilliant, desirable and beautiful future.

Today, I would like to talk to the Assembly about the main reasons behind the conditions ruling the world and the means to address them. Of course, the Assembly is already aware of what I am talking about, but I think it is necessary to remind ourselves. It seems that the roots of problems lie in the way one views and perceives the world and humankind, as well as in the important issues of freedom, obeisance to God, and justice. The world, humankind, freedom, obeisance to God, and justice have been of the utmost importance to humans throughout history.

God Almighty purposefully created the world. The world is the bedrock for the evolution and growth of a creature called man, and the laws governing the world and all other creatures are at the service of humankind's quest for loftiness. The world should provide the needed opportunities for the fulfilment of the purpose behind humankind's creation. No phenomenon, creature or, indeed, anything has been created in vain. Together they all pave the way for the flourishing of humankind in a complex and purposeful system, and they are each one of the signs of God Almighty. All are His creations and He is the sole creator and ruler of the world. All existence, including power, knowledge and wealth, comes from Him.

With regard to humankind, God created the world for humans, and humans for Himself. He created humans from mud and in the soil, but He did not want them to remain in the soil or with animal instincts. He kindled the light of guidance in their souls and asked them to rise from the soil to the heavens and to Him with the help of wisdom, prophets and perfect men.

The world will ultimately disappear, but God has created humankind for eternity and has made it a manifestation of Himself. Creativity, mercifulness, kindness, knowledge, wisdom, zeal, compassion, splendor, justice, bounteousness, generosity, greatness, love, glory, dignity, forgiveness, insight, kingship and all other goodness and beauty are attributes of God. God did not create humans for aggression, bloodshed, rancour, selfishness and destruction. He made humans His vicegerents on Earth and has asked them, on the one hand, to make Earth prosper by using their God-given potentials, to prepare the ground for the growth of divine attributes in all humans and to provide all with a life full of beauty, amity, freedom, justice and goodness; and, on the other hand, in pursuance of that path, to prepare for a prosperous, everlasting life endowed by God's mercy. God has obligated humans to live divinely and socially, for it is only through social life and interactions with others that divine attributes can emerge.

With regard to obeisance to God, God Almighty has tied the perfection and true freedom of humans to the devotion and obedience to Himself. True freedom and obedience to God are in balance, and in fact are two sides of the same coin. Obeisance to God means confessing to monotheism, obeying His commands, and being free from ungodly worship. Obeisance to God means the acceptance of the absolute truth, the absolute light and the absolute beauty. Obeisance to God means abandoning selfishness, animal instincts, power-seeking and aggression and surrendering to righteousness, justice, love and perfection.

In that way, humans can achieve their true freedom and flourish. They can grow and manifest divine attributes, have affection for others, stand up for justice, fear no power or threat and defend the oppressed. In such an environment, one's freedom will not impinge on any others'. Contention and conflict are characteristic of materialistic freedom and animal instinct. The essence of all divine religions and obeisance to God and true freedom is disassociating from oppressors and instead obeying and worshiping God.

God is omniscient and knows all that is revealed or kept secret, and He is kind and merciful. All creatures are humble before Him and resign themselves to His will. God is alive and is the Creator of the universe and all life. God loves His creatures and desires nothing but goodness, blessings and perfection for them, and is against bullying, injustice, selfishness and domination.

With regard to justice, it is the foundation of the creation of humankind and the whole universe. Justice is tantamount to placing every phenomenon in its own place and providing humans with opportunities to

actualize all their divine capabilities. Without it, the order of the universe will collapse and the opportunity for perfection will fade away. Without justice, it would be impossible for human society to taste real peace, beauty, joy and happiness. Justice is the main pillar of social life, and without it social life cannot continue or grow.

Humans need to know God in order to realize a prosperous society in this world as well as to strive for a beautiful eternal life. To that end, they first have to know themselves and strive for loftiness in themselves and their societies. However, as long as the world is construed as closed, limited and aimless; as long as eternal life is considered imaginary and illusory, while the afterlife and the judgment day, as well as reward and punishment, are thought of as fictional and unreal; as long as morals and commitment to them are called backwardness, while immorality, lies, deceit and selfishness are considered desirable and humans are limited to a materialistic life in this world; as long as attempts are made to replace obedience to God and following His prophets and true freedom with servitude to materialistic tendencies, animal instincts and the oppression of others, while contention reaches its pinnacle; as long as the aggressors, because of their financial, political and propaganda powers, not only escape punishment but even claim righteousness; and as long as wars are started and nations enslaved in order to win votes in elections, not only will the problems of the global community remain unsolved, but they will be increasingly exacerbated.

Let us look at the situation in the world today.

Iraq was attacked under the false pretext of uncovering weapons of mass destruction and overthrowing a dictator. The dictator was toppled and weapons of mass destruction were not uncovered. A democratic government is established by the votes of the people, but after six years the occupiers are still there. They insist on imposing colonial agreements on the people of Iraq by keeping them under Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter. Millions of people have been killed or displaced, and the occupiers, with no sense of shame, are still seeking to solidify their position in the political geography of the region and to dominate oil resources. They have no respect for the people of Iraq and they disregard any dignity, rights or status for them. The United Nations is not capable enough to solve the problems and to stop aggression, occupation and imposition.

In Palestine, 60 years of carnage and invasion is still continuing at the hands of some criminal and occupying Zionists. They have forged a regime by collecting people from various parts of the world and bringing them to another people's land by displacing, detaining and killing the true owners of that land. With advance notice, they invade, assassinate and maintain food and medicine blockades, while some hegemonic and bullying Powers support them. The Security Council cannot do anything and sometimes, under pressure from a few bullying Powers, even paves the way for supporting those Zionist murderers. It is natural that some United Nations resolutions that have addressed the plight of the Palestinian people have been relegated to the archives unnoticed.

In Afghanistan, the production of narcotics has multiplied since the presence of NATO forces began. Domestic conflicts continue, terrorism is spreading and innocent people are bombarded on a daily basis in streets, markets, and schools and at wedding ceremonies. The people of Afghanistan are the victims of the willingness of NATO member States to dominate the regions surrounding India, China and South Asia. The Security Council cannot do anything about it because some of those NATO members also happen to be the major decision-makers in the Council.

In Africa, there are efforts to re-establish the relationships of the colonial era. By starting civil wars in large countries, including the Sudan, the disintegration of those countries is planned in order to serve the interests of some corrupt Powers. When there is national resistance, the leaders of the resistance are put under pressure by legal mechanisms created by the very same Powers.

In Latin America, people find their security, national interests and cultures seriously endangered by the menacing shadow of alien domineering Governments, and even by the embassies of some empires.

The lives, property and rights of the people of Georgia, Ossetia and Abkhazia are victims of the tendencies and provocation of NATO and certain Western Powers and the underhanded actions of the Zionists.

The never-ending arms race, the proliferation and stockpiling of nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction, and the threats to use them and the

establishment of missile defence systems have made the situation unstable.

With regard to Iran's peaceful nuclear programme, despite the inalienable right of all nations, including the Iranian nation, to produce nuclear fuel for peaceful purposes, and despite such facts as the transparency of all Iranian activities and our country's full cooperation with the inspectors of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and the Agency's repeated confirmation of the fact that Iran's activities are peaceful, a few bullying Powers have sought to put hurdles in the way of the peaceful nuclear activities of the Iranian nation by exerting political and economic pressure on Iran and threatening and pressuring IAEA. Those are the same Powers that produce new generations of lethal nuclear arms and possess stockpiles of nuclear weapons that no international organization is monitoring. Moreover, the tragedies of Hiroshima and Nagasaki were perpetrated by one of them.

Indeed, they are not against weapons, but they oppose the progress of other nations, and tend to monopolize technologies and to use those monopolies to impose their will on other nations. However, it is very natural that the great Iranian people, with their trust in God, with determination and steadfastness and with the support of their friends, will resist the bullying and have defended and will continue to defend their rights. The Iranian nation is for dialogue, but it has not accepted and will not accept illegal demands. The time has come for IAEA to present a clear report to the international community on its monitoring of the disarmament of those nuclear Powers and their nuclear activities, and for a disarmament committee to be established by independent States to monitor the disarmament of those nuclear Powers.

Theories of development that are in line with the hegemonic system and not in accordance with the true needs of humankind and human societies have become repetitive and bland tools for assimilating economies, expanding hegemonic domination and destroying the environment and the social solidarity of nations. There is no end in sight to this. Poverty, hunger and deprivation are hurting more than one billion of the world's population and have dashed their hopes for a decent life.

The dignity, integrity and rights of the American and European people are being played with by a small but deceitful number of people called Zionists. Although they are a minuscule minority, they have been dominating an important portion of the financial and monetary centres, as well as the political decision-making centres of some European countries and the United States, in a deceitful, complex and furtive manner. It is deeply disastrous to witness that some presidential or premier nominees in some big countries have to visit those people, take part in their gatherings and swear their allegiances and commitment to their interests in order to attain financial or media support.

That means that the great people of America and various nations of Europe need to obey the demands and wishes of a small number of acquisitive and invasive people. Those nations are spending their dignity and resources on the crimes, occupation and threats of the Zionist network against their will.

All that is due to the manner in which the immoral and the powerful view the world, humankind, freedom, obeisance to God and justice. The thoughts and deeds of those who think they are superior to others and consider others to be second class and inferior, who intend to remain out of the divine circle and to be the absolute slaves of their materialistic and selfish desires, who intend to expand their aggressive and domineering natures, constitute the roots of the problems in societies today. They are the hindrances to the realization of material and spiritual prosperity and to security, peace and brotherhood among nations.

I explicitly state that the Iranian people and the overwhelming majority of peoples and Governments are against those deeds and perspectives of the world-domineering Powers. The establishment of justice requires people who have achieved moderation and justice inside themselves, restrained their domineering attitudes and actualized their attributes of self-sacrifice and are at the service of humankind. The complete and full-scale manifestation of such characteristics can happen only under the rule of the righteous and perfect human being who is obedient to God and who is promised by the divine prophets.

Of course, with the grace of God Almighty, a hopeful trend is flourishing in the heart and soul of human societies. The universal eagerness for justice, purity, love for others, monotheism and the quest for perfection is clearly and increasingly on the rise. A universal resistance to the acquisitiveness, aggression and selfishness of the bullying Powers is being formed.

Today, the bullying Powers' thoughts, practices and strategies are rejected by nations and Governments, and all are seeking to establish new human relations based on justice, with a view to attaining prosperity, perfection, security and sustainable welfare. That is the very auspicious phenomenon that all the traditions of creation and the ruling laws of the universe emphasize and support.

Today, the Zionist regime is on a definite slope to collapse, and there is no way for it to get out of the cesspool it and its supporters have created. The Islamic Republic of Iran, while fully respecting the resistance of the oppressed people of Palestine and expressing its all-out support for it, submits to the Secretary-General of the United Nations its humane solution, based on a free referendum in Palestine to determine and establish the type of State in the entire Palestinian lands.

The American empire in the world is reaching the end of its road, and its next rulers must limit their interference to their own borders. Today, the thought of hegemony quickly becomes a demerit.

I should now like to say a few words to expansionist Governments ruling global relations. Be aware that living with obedience to God and carrying out His orders, having compassion for people and striving for the fulfilment of justice is to your advantage too. I invite you to return to the path of God, the prophets and the people of the world, as well as to truth and justice. The only route to salvation is a divine straight path. Otherwise, God's hand of power will emerge from the sleeve of oppressed nations and will make your life difficult, and will put an end to your hegemony. Let us love the peoples of the world and respect their rights. Rectify past behaviour. That will benefit you and the human community. The Iranian people are prepared, along with other nations, to help you be rescued from your current situation and to establish peace and prosperity.

Fortuitously, opportunities are accessible. With the grace of God Almighty, the existing pillars of the oppressive system are crumbling. Great developments in favour of humankind, as well as its true and real rights, are on the way. A golden and brilliant future is awaiting humankind. A global community filled with justice, friendship, brotherhood and welfare is at hand, as I have elaborated — a community that will tread the path of beauty and love under the rule of the righteous and perfect human being, the one promised by all divine prophets and the one who is the true lover of humankind; a community that will be devoid of all fear, despair and privation. Such a community will soon be ours. The community promised by the great divine prophets Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus Christ and Muhammad is about to materialize.

Let us, hand in hand, expand the thought of resistance to evil and the minority of those who are ill-wishers. Let us support goodness and the majority of people who are good and the embodiment of absolute good that is the Imam of Time, the Promised One who will come accompanied by Jesus Christ, and accordingly design and implement just and humanistic mechanisms for regulating the constructive relationships between nations and Governments.

May the great Almighty deliver the saviour of nations and put an end to the sufferings of humankind and bring forth justice, beauty and love. Let us have a proper share in the establishment of that illuminated and promised divine age.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Islamic Republic of Iran for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, President of the Islamic Republic of Iran, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Michel Sleiman, President of the Lebanese Republic

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Lebanese Republic.

Mr. Michel Sleiman, President of the Lebanese Republic, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Michel Sleiman, President of the Lebanese Republic, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Sleiman (*spoke in Arabic*): I should like to begin by congratulating you, Sir, on your election as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-third session.

I should also like in particular to thank Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for the excellent report he has prepared on the activities of the Organization in the past year (A/63/1), as well as for his concern in ensuring that the issues of Lebanon are at the centre of debate. In its close pursuit of the situation in Lebanon, the United Nations has established the foundations and principles necessary to face the crises and challenges that have undermined the stability and prosperity of our country. I would like to note in particular the role of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) and pay tribute to the sacrifices of its personnel. I note also that in his report the Secretary-General notes that there is strong cooperation between UNIFIL and the Lebanese army. I would like to confirm that Lebanon cares a great deal about the security and safety of those troops, especially vis-à-vis the terrorist attacks of which they have been the target.

Lebanon is the cradle of an ancient civilization. Its peace-loving people set sail from their shores towards the European continent, carrying with them elements of an advanced alphabet and spreading in the Mediterranean realm and whatever horizons they were able to open the spirit of communication, dialogue, and free exchange.

Lebanon, which believes in human and cultural values, is one of the oldest parliamentary democracies in the Middle East. Its constitution of 1926 embraces freedom of opinion, freedom of belief and justice and rejects confessionalism and fanaticism. In its endeavour to put this democracy into practice, our nation experienced a distinctive alternation of power despite all the crises, aggression and wars it has known. Today, our country is preparing for new parliamentary elections.

The young Lebanese nation that emerged in 1943, however, suffered from the aftermath of the catastrophe that befell Palestine in 1948. It has received on its narrow territory hundreds of thousands of Palestinian refugees. Since the late sixties, it has been subject to two large-scale Israeli invasions and to a series of Israeli devastating attacks that wreaked havoc in terms of lives, property and infrastructure. The records kept by this Organization bear witness to that brutality.

I recall the two massacres of Qana that were perpetrated against innocent children, women and the elderly, as well as the aggression of July 2006 in which tens of thousands were killed and wounded and displaced which led to the destruction of bridges and civilian facilities in various parts of the country. The Israeli bombardment of the Jiyeh power plant and its fuel storage tanks caused an environmental catastrophe resulting from an oil slick along the Lebanese coastline. That prompted the General Assembly of the United Nations to request Israel to provide immediate and adequate compensation to Lebanon for the damage and pollution it caused. Israel must pay due compensation for the full damage it caused through its repeated aggression against Lebanon.

The United Nations has not hesitated to shoulder its responsibilities towards Lebanon. The Organization issued a series of resolutions in support of Lebanon's independence, sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity, notably Security Council resolutions 425 (1978), which called for an immediate and unconditional Israeli withdrawal from all Lebanese territory, and 1701 (2006), which "calls upon the Government of Israel ... to withdraw all of its forces from southern Lebanon". Lebanon reiterates its commitment to the full content of that resolution.

Mr. Yañez-Barnuevo (Spain), Vice-President, took the Chair.

However, the intransigence of Israel and its failure to comply with the will of the United Nations Security Council pushed Lebanon to adopt, in conjunction with diplomacy, other legitimate options. In 2000, thanks to its people, army and resistance, Lebanon was able to force Israel to withdraw from most of the Lebanese territory that it occupied. This year, successful efforts were made, with the help of the United Nations, to complete the liberation of the Lebanese prisoners and detainees from Israeli prisons.

Despite these achievements and its continued commitment to the resolutions of international legitimacy, Lebanon still faces a host of urgent risks and challenges that require the following.

First, the international community should compel Israel to fully implement resolution 1701 (2006) and stop its serious threats to launch a new war against Lebanon. Such threats are acts of aggression that adversely affect the Lebanese State, the national economy and civil society.

The second challenge is the recovery or liberation of the remaining occupied Lebanese territory in Shabaa Farms, the hills of Kfarshuba and the northern part of

the village of Al-Ghajar, and the upholding of our rights to our water.

Thirdly, Israel must be forced to stop its extensive air breaches of Lebanon's sovereignty. In its most recent briefing to the Security Council, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations confirmed the provocative nature of those actions.

Fourthly, we must obtain all the maps of landmines and cluster-bomb sites left behind by Israel on Lebanese soil. Their presence constitutes a direct threat to the civilian population, especially children. It deprives farmers and families of their livelihood and prevents them from cultivating their land. The States concerned are therefore called upon to meet their pledges to provide the necessary resources for demining declustering programmes.

Fifthly, we need to confront terrorism in all its forms and to maintain internal civic peace. The Lebanese army and the internal security forces have been subjected to brutal attacks by terrorist groups in recent years. They were forced to confront such terrorist groups and make costly and huge sacrifices to defend the dignity of the Lebanese people and their security and stability. In their efforts to combat Israeli terrorist operations, the Lebanese security services managed to arrest the head of an Israeli network that carried out espionage and assassination operations on Lebanese soil.

The sixth challenge is to develop a comprehensive national strategy to protect and defend Lebanon, which would be adopted and coordinated through genuine national dialogue, which we held on 16 September. That is in accord with the Doha Agreement, which is based on the sincere will for national reconciliation and on extending the authority of the Lebanese State over all of its territory.

On this occasion, Lebanon reiterates its commitment to the international tribunal established under Security Council resolution 1757 (2007) to investigate the crime of the assassination of martyr Prime Minister Rafik Hariri and his companions. Lebanon is cooperating with the relevant organs of the United Nations to bring the truth to light and to achieve the process of justice away from any politicization.

Lebanon closely follows the developments of the situation in the Middle East. In view of its commitment to just Arab causes, especially the cause of Palestine, Lebanon reiterates its commitment to the process of achieving a just and comprehensive peace in the region and to the Arab peace initiative that was unanimously adopted by Arab leaders at the 2002 Beirut Summit. Having said that, Lebanon stresses the need for Israel to withdraw from all Arab territories that are still under occupation and stresses the inalienable right of the Palestinian people to return to their land and to establish their independent State on their national soil.

We call on the international community to assume its full responsibilities to provide the necessary financial resources to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) and to support the work carried out by the Lebanese State in this area, until a just solution to the Palestinian problem is found.

From this rostrum, Lebanon cannot but draw the attention of the international community once again to its absolute rejection of any form of resettlement of the Palestinian refugees on its territory, for the following main reasons.

First, the resettlement of the Palestinian refugees in Lebanon runs counter to their right to return to their homeland and homes, which is reaffirmed by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the relevant United Nations resolutions.

Secondly, it is difficult for a small country like Lebanon, with limited resources and a population below 4 million people, to provide a decent livelihood for more than 400,000 Palestinian refugees on its territory at a time when large segments of the Lebanese people are emigrating in search of their own livelihoods.

Thirdly, the resettlement of Palestinian refugees is explicitly rejected in the preamble to the Lebanese Constitution, and by the Taif Agreement, which has been recognized and enshrined by resolutions of the United Nations and constitutes a key element of consensus in Lebanon.

While the issue of Lebanon is at the centre of attention of the United Nations, the agenda of our General Assembly is full of items and of political, economic, social and environmental topics that are still waiting for a comprehensive solution. In that context, Lebanon interacts in a special way with the needs and aspirations of the African continent, where hundreds of thousands of Lebanese citizens have been living on its

generous soil for over a century, contributing to Africa's prosperity and development under difficult circumstances. Accordingly, we support the political declaration issued yesterday at the high-level meeting on Africa's development needs. We therefore believe that a major international effort should be undertaken to finance programmes to combat poverty, disease and illiteracy as a means to preserve human dignity and to prevent further armed conflicts on that continent.

Similarly, we hope that a more effective project to build solidarity in the face of natural disasters will be quickly and efficiently finalized in view of the increasing risks arising from climate change, global warming, environmental degradation and the spread of wildfires in forests and green spaces.

Deeply rooted in history and, with the rise of nationalist movements, a contributor to the shaping of the Arab renaissance at the political, cultural, intellectual and social levels, as well as a founding member of the League of Arab States, Lebanon is devoted to preserving Arab solidarity. In that context, we need to revisit the concept of cooperation and good-neighbourliness between countries to consolidate peace and solidarity in the world. That approach will contribute to preserving human rights, and humanity will thus be able to prevent other world wars, regional conflicts and the transnational phenomenon of terrorism, as well as upheavals in our globalized economies, global crises and food crises. All of those matters represent major threats that could spark new wars that might spill over onto the regional level and from one continent to the next.

We need to push for United Nations reform in order to meet that new international challenge. Lebanon is extremely pleased to announce that we have been nominated once again to a non-permanent seat on the Security Council for the biennium 2010-2011. We are of course committed to making a positive and constructive contribution to the Council and hope that we will have the support of all friendly and brotherly States.

Lebanon's philosophy has been based on dialogue and coexistence from the day its citizens approved the National Covenant in 1943, and subsequently when they approved the 1989 National Reconciliation Agreement in Taif. Those themes were also repeatedly stressed in the 2008 Doha agreement. In the face of worsening international conflicts that herald a potential clash of civilizations, Lebanon might well represent a needed international example as a living laboratory of dialogue of cultures and religions.

In his Apostolic Letter of 1989, His Holiness the late Pope John Paul II described Lebanon as "more than a country; it is a message of freedom and a model of pluralism for both the East and the West". Moreover, in his homily delivered during his apostolic journey to Lebanon in 1997, John Paul II characterized Lebanon as "a country of many religious faiths, [which] has shown that these different faiths can live together in peace, brotherhood and cooperation". With 18 different sects coexisting on its soil, and having successfully preserved its democratic system and fundamental freedoms in spite of all sorts of challenges, Lebanon aspires today to become an international centre for the management of dialogue of civilizations and cultures, hoping that the forces of good in the world will prevail and that we can be constructive in our efforts to reach a just and comprehensive solution to all aspects of the conflict in the Middle East as soon as possible.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Lebanon for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Michel Sleiman, President of the Republic of Lebanon, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Mwai Kibaki, President of the Republic of Kenya

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Kenya.

Mr. Mwai Kibaki, President of the Republic of Kenya, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Mwai Kibaki, President of the Republic of Kenya, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Kibaki: I wish first to congratulate Mr. D'Escoto Brockmann on his election to the presidency of the General Assembly.

This session of the General Assembly is taking place at a time of great global challenges, such as the

energy crisis, high food prices and instability in the financial markets. Those are serious problems that could erode the gains the world economy has made in the past 10 years. Let me add that our gathering here also provides a window of opportunity for us to review the progress we have made, individually and collectively, in fulfilling the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

Nevertheless, before proceeding with my remarks, I wish first of all to update the Assembly on the progress Kenya has made following the challenges we faced soon after the general elections held in December 2007.

Kenyans, fellow Africans and the international community held on to the hope that our country would obtain a peacefully negotiated outcome to the political crisis. That hope was realized on 28 February with the signing of the National Accord and Reconciliation Act. The Accord paved the way for the establishment of a grand coalition Government representing all major political parties and interests in our country.

The Government is making use of that historic window of opportunity to build a consensus that will enable us to address the major challenges facing our nation. We are, for instance, making good progress towards the implementation of far-reaching legal, constitutional and policy reforms that will entrench national cohesion and meet the political, economic and social aspirations of our people.

I am confident that, over the past few months, Kenya has regained its glory and redeemed its image as a peaceful nation, a safe tourist and investment destination and the regional hub for peace and humanitarian efforts. I wish to express, on behalf of all Kenyans, our profound gratitude for the engagement and support of all our friends. In that connection, I wish to pay special tribute to the members of the Panel of Eminent African Personalities, led by former Secretary-General Kofi Annan, the African Union and the United Nations. I would also like to thank the Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, for his personal and constant support.

As Africa grapples with the challenges of competitive elections in fragile democracies divided by regional, racial, religious and ethnic differences, the time has come for us to reflect on the role of competitive electoral processes in the building of our national democratic institutions.

Indeed, the challenge of attaining democratic and inclusive elected Governments is at the core of the conflicts and insecurity prevailing in many parts of Africa. In the Sudan, for example, the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) continues to hold three years after its signing, despite challenges. I welcome the efforts made by the parties to the CPA in overcoming some recent difficulties. I urge them to intensify their efforts to address all outstanding issues in the implementation of the Accord.

On the other hand, the situation in Somalia remains fragile. That is mainly because the Transitional Federal Government of Somalia has still not received full support from the international community.

While I pay tribute to the Governments of Uganda and Burundi for providing troops as part of the African Union Mission in Somalia, I urge the deployment of the remaining troops to strengthen the Mission. I also urge the United Nations and the international community to assume greater responsibility in Somalia so as to nurture the emergence of a stable and democratic country.

With regard to the Great Lakes, tremendous progress has been made in promoting peace while reducing conflict in the region. The conclusion of the Pact on Security, Stability and Development in the Great Lakes Region has given impetus to our efforts. However, the implementation of the Pact faces challenges owing to renewed tension and hostilities. I call upon all those involved to embrace the Pact and to seek the peaceful resolution of current problems. We must not derail our goal of achieving economic development and regional integration in the Great Lakes. The Special Fund for Reconstruction and Development, on which we all agreed, is now operational. I appeal to the international community to contribute to the Fund. It is a crucial pillar for the promotion of peace and development in the Great Lakes region.

I now return to the food crisis, which I mentioned at the beginning of my speech. Our meeting is taking place at a time when Africa and many other parts of the world are facing a severe food shortage. I am therefore happy to note that the theme of this general debate, "The impact of the global food crisis on poverty and hunger in the world as well as the need to democratize the United Nations", pays particular attention to that important subject. Indeed, while food prices have risen

globally, their impact has been most severe and adverse for the poorest people living in developing countries. The continued rise in food prices has national security implications for most developing nations.

Therefore, in the immediate future, we must, as Members of the United Nations, find mechanisms to deliver sufficient quantities of affordable food to poor people in Africa and other parts of the developing world. In the medium term, we must also address the issues of agricultural productivity, particularly in terms of making available to smaller farmers in Africa better-yielding seed varieties, modern farming techniques and cheaper fertilizer. That will require more effective global partnerships among developed nations, international institutions and developing nations. In particular, such partnerships should place food security, agricultural technology development and transfer, trade and agricultural credit at the centre of the development agenda.

Indeed, the most equitable way to lift Africa's people out of poverty and underdevelopment is through the widespread commercialization of agriculture. We must focus on the manufacture of and trade in value-added agricultural products, supported by efficient financial services and markets. In that regard, the global community should hasten consensus on agriculture and other contentious issues, so as to enable the successful conclusion of the Doha Development Round of the World Trade Organization.

On the issue of escalating global oil prices, I wish to make a passionate appeal to oil-producing nations to consider the plight of non-oil-producing nations, especially those in the developing world. There is need to address the problem of speculative trading in the oil futures market, where prices have doubled in the past year. Indeed, the rapid increase in oil prices is hurting developing countries the most and does not augur well for international peace and stability. We should all be aware that we are one global community and that none of us is completely isolated from the instability caused by inflationary pressures resulting from the high oil prices.

We have, over the years, discussed the need for a more effective and accountable United Nations that will enable us to address the emerging and persistent global challenges such as climate change, international security, poverty, conflicts and economic disparities. Towards that end, reform at the Security Council is imperative. We need to ensure that its composition reflects equitable geographical representation of the entire United Nations membership. Africa therefore deserves permanent representation on the Security Council.

Reforms are also needed in other areas. We are convinced that strengthening the Economic and Social Council will enable that organ to reassert its authority and its capacity to promote greater coherence and coordination with the multinational financial institutions, the World Trade Organization and other United Nations bodies.

I would like to congratulate the Secretary-General for his continued focus on the Millennium Development Goals and, in particular, the establishment of the MDGs Africa Steering Group, which has, among other interventions, proposed the launching of an African green revolution. I also look forward to the insights and recommendations that will come out of the High-level Event on MDGs later this week.

Finally, I wish to note that the challenges facing us today, such as the global food crisis, attaining the MDGs and climate change, more than ever before require coordinated global and multilateral cooperation. A more effective and accountable United Nations is therefore needed to meet and overcome these challenges.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Kenya for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Mwai Kibaki, President of the Republic of Kenya, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

The President returned to the Chair.

Address by Mr. Martín Torrijos, President of the Republic of Panama

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Panama.

Mr. Martín Torrijos, President of the Republic of Panama, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to

the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Martín Torrijos, President of the Republic of Panama, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Torrijos (*spoke in Spanish*): My first words are addressed to the President of the General Assembly, at its sixty-third session, my friend Miguel d'Escoto. I am pleased that the responsibility of presiding over our deliberations has fallen to a distinguished Latin American of such political and diplomatic eminence in his country and in the region.

The President has invited us — and because of its great importance we are obliged to comply with his suggestion — to focus our debate on the impact of the world food crisis on poverty and hunger in the world.

This Organization was founded at the end of a world conflagration in order to banish war forever and to prevent armed confrontations between nations or groups of nations. Although it has not been possible to avoid all such events, certainly it has acted as a deterrent force that has prevented wars that might have proved even more devastating. The nations of the world decided that it would be here that conflicts among its Members would be resolved.

Now we have to act on a conflict that is not between Member States, but is rather one of all States against hunger and poverty. It is difficult to explain why, if the world is producing sufficient food for all, 854 million people find themselves in a state of food insecurity and more than 1.7 billion people are suffering from iron deficiency. In the last few days we have noted how hundreds of millions of dollars have been directed to rescue commercial enterprises, while we still view with indifference the fact that every year 5.6 million children younger than 5 years are dying directly or indirectly because of malnutrition — that is 640 each hour. In other words, since the moment when we began our deliberations this morning, 5,000 children younger than 5 years have died. They did not die because of terrorist acts, which all condemn, nor because of natural disasters, which we all regret. They died for a reason as simple as it is tragic — they were poor. This situation is simply indefensible.

As part of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), we undertook to reduce the number of people suffering from hunger by one half and the number of people who live with an income of less than $1 per day by one half between 1990 and 2015. How can we meet this objective if the price of rice has risen by 74 per cent and that of wheat by 130 per cent? How can we meet this objective if more than one billion people who have escaped extreme poverty run the risk of suffering from hunger unless we do something to stop this upward spiral of food prices?

What is the point of ensuring that more people earn more than a dollar a day if the rise in food prices has in fact altered that measurement of extreme poverty? I do not want to suggest that nothing is being done. The World Food Programme is doing formidable work and donor countries have made extraordinary contributions to alleviate the crisis and bring food to the countries that need it most.

The deliberations of the Human Rights Council, the High-level Conference on World Food Security held at the headquarters of the Food and Agriculture Organization and the meeting of the High-level Task Force on the Global Food Security Crisis constitute additional expressions of the concern of international bodies.

But the fact is that we face a reality that has already caused social disruption and to which no immediate solution is in sight. The major mission of the United Nations is the preservation of peace, and peace is not just the absence of armed conflict between countries, but also lies in the tranquillity of nations and entails the elimination of adverse factors that may disturb that tranquillity.

As if skyrocketing food prices were not enough, they have now been compounded by unjustified speculation, which has raised the price of fuel to absurd levels. It is no longer just the exorbitant earnings of oil companies that are at stake; what is at stake now is the hunger of millions of people who have seen their efforts and hopes go up in smoke without even knowing what has hit them.

This means that we must see to it that from the United Nations reforms that have been so often postponed there emerges a strengthened General Assembly so that, as an expression of all its membership, it may act with authority in response to such situations as those before us today. The Constitution of almost all States of the world provides for the declaration of a state of emergency as a mechanism for dealing with imminent threats to national security or to social harmony.

I am convinced, and I want to say so today, that because of the price of food, we are facing a threat to social peace and that the General Assembly could so declare it so that all governmental forces, private initiatives and international bodies may coordinate their efforts in a crusade to rescue hundreds of millions of people from the clutches of poverty.

The world food price crisis cannot be dissociated from climate change, as if these two problems were not interrelated. Climate change has led to irregular crops through droughts and floods that have had such a severe effect on food stocks.

If the problem of the scarcity and the lack of food is something that we have to deal with comprehensively, we should take measures to mitigate the polluting effects of carbon, at least by market mechanisms or a limiting of carbon production. It is indispensable to develop more efficient technologies, such as wind and solar energy, to take the place of fossil fuels, if our response is not to remain a temporary palliative but may offer a lasting, sustainable solution; we must see to it, without further delay, that we tackle both problems, the food crisis and climate change, in an integral, comprehensive and consistent manner.

It is only thus that we will be able, without further delay, to arrive at responses that are not just stopgaps, but lasting, sustainable solutions. Indeed, ever-greater importance is to be attached to the way we relate to the ecosystems that sustain life throughout the world, and how that affects the survival of our species and civilization.

We must understand that the environmental agenda of the twenty-first century cannot be built on the basis of the idea of a conflict between the environment and the market, nor between the environment and trade barriers, but on the basis of opportunities which the market and trade offer to stimulate new ways of addressing the environmental issues that affect us all.

We know today that there is no intractable contradiction between conservation and development, as perhaps there might have appeared to be when the United Nations convened the first meeting to discuss the subject in 1972. Let us make no mistake. The opposite of conservation is not development, but waste. It is clear from the intimate relationship that exists between environmental problems and those that have to do with social and economic development that the best way to promote natural capital is to promote social capital.

The only way to create a different environment is to build a society free of the problems of poverty, underdevelopment and ignorance which today limit our capacity to establish harmonious relations among all social sectors, and between them and their natural environment.

We have the resources to do it: technology, scientific knowledge and, above all, political leadership and innovative capacity. But we can only succeed through a common approach to environmental management, shared by all the members of the global community who are already moving in this same direction.

The international community has been happy to see that on the other side of the Pacific, tensions have abated, but we note with concern that threats to international peace and security have emerged in other parts of the world.

Panama has set forth its positions in the Security Council. I shall therefore only refer to what was also suggested by the President, that is, the need to democratize this Organization.

Over the last four years, I have heard from countless speakers a widespread demand for the United Nations to finally adapt its structures, which the 50 signatories of the original Charter designed 60 years ago, to the reality of an Organization with 192 Member States and a geopolitical situation very different from that which then existed.

It has become a ritual repeated year after year for every Head of State, foreign minister or ambassador to call, without much success, for a recrafting of the Organization. For myself, as is shown by the commitment of my country to the United Nations, for the fifth time in five years, I come to this podium to ask with the same vigour and energy for the political will to implement reforms.

Panama made a proposal, which, like all the others, could not be the subject of consensus. We still stand by it. We stand by the idea that this Organization must modernize itself, and soon. We cannot allow a situation where, in the absence of agreement, we end up by abandoning the spirit of reform that has inspired us up till now.

I propose therefore that we agree, before the end of the decade, upon initial fundamental reforms which will begin to turn the wheels of modernization. There are numerous examples in different parts of the world, as well as in my own experience as a member of the Government, that allow me to assure members that small reforms, which may appear insignificant to begin with, eventually lead to other, more profound reforms. We must start somewhere.

I would like to express my gratitude to the General Assembly for granting my country, Panama, the honour of non-permanent membership of the Security Council over the past two years. Panamanian diplomats and jurists contributed to the drafting of the Charter of the United Nations and, since that time, Panama's representatives have contributed the wealth of their experience so that the principles which inspired the Charter can continue to prevail. You may rest assured that we will not rest until this Organization, so vital for peace in the world and the sole hope for millions of the poor, is finally endowed with a legal structure appropriate for the twenty-first century.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Panama for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Martín Torrijos, President of the Republic of Panama, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Yoweri Kaguta Museveni, President of the Republic of Uganda

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Uganda.

Mr. Yoweri Kaguta Museveni, President of the Republic of Uganda, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Yoweri Kaguta Museveni, President of the Republic of Uganda, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Museveni: Allow me at the outset, Sir, to congratulate you on your election to the presidency of the General Assembly. Uganda is convinced that, with your experience and well-known diplomatic skills, we shall have a successful session. I wish today to pay tribute to your predecessor, His Excellency Srgjan Kerim, for the excellent manner in which he presided over the sixty-second session. I would also like to pay tribute to the Secretary-General for his leadership and efforts to reform our Organization.

The founding fathers of the United Nations had a dream of creating an organization whose purpose, among others, was "to achieve international cooperation in solving international problems of an economic, social, cultural or humanitarian character". Today the world is facing a multitude of problems, many of which the United Nations was meant to address.

It is encouraging that the theme chosen for this session is the impact of the global food crisis on poverty and hunger in the world as well as the need to democratize the United Nations. The view of some of us in Uganda is that the so-called food crisis is actually good for equatorial Africa. It is certainly good for Uganda's farmers. Over the years, we have been growing a lot of food: maize, bananas, Irish potatoes, sweet potatoes, cassava, rice and wheat; and producing animal products such as milk and beef. The problem has always been the market for this food.

That was an account of two problems: first, protectionism in the United States, the European Union, Japan, China, et cetera; and secondly, the lack of factories to process that food so that it could reach distant markets. Apart from these two, there are other factors in some African countries, including poor traffic infrastructure, lack of electricity, lack of seeds, et cetera. These, however, do not apply to Uganda. In the case of Uganda, the problem has been the lack of markets and low processing capacity, in other words, low value addition. The rest we have, or we can have easily.

The high food and commodity prices have arisen on account of the hundreds of millions of Chinese and Indians that have entered the opulent middle class in the last 20 years. That means they need better food, better houses that require cement and steel bars, and better means of locomotion such as cars. That is why food and commodity prices have gone up. It is for the same reason that petroleum prices have gone up: if only 200 people were driving cars previously, the number has now risen to 400. That means more demand for petroleum. Following the continuously

rising petroleum prices, some Western countries have started talking of biofuels — using plants to produce diesel.

Uganda, however, welcomes all of this. It is an opportunity, as far as we are concerned. It is not a bottleneck. In fact, farmers in Uganda are already reaping high. That is why our economy grew by 9 per cent last year. Once we solve the problem of energy, our economy will grow in double digits.

It is good that the United States of America, the European Union, India, Japan and China have opened their markets to African products, tariff-free, quota-free. However, there is still the issue of subsidies. They should be removed. In Uganda, we farm without subsidies. Why should not the farmers in those countries with better infrastructure, lower interest rates, abundant electricity, et cetera, do the same? Why do they need protection? Protectionism interferes with those countries that can produce food easily, such as Uganda. That is not correct.

We have been producing too much milk without having the capacity to process it. Recently, an Indian-owned company installed a high-tech integrated milk-processing plant and began to process powdered milk, producing a whole range of finished milk products: pasteurized milk, ultra-heat-treated (long-life) milk, yoghurt, butter, ghee, et cetera. Those milk products are now being exported to all parts of the world.

Another example has been bananas. Uganda produces 10 million metric tons of bananas per annum. These are high-quality bananas — called *enyam wonyo* in one of our local dialects — which contain rare ingredients. They are quite different from the bananas known in other parts of the world. Forty per cent of those bananas have been rotting in gardens and marketplaces. Our scientists, funded by our Government, are now converting them into processed foods such as flour, bread, snacks, et cetera.

High fuel prices are a real problem for countries that do not have petroleum. Maximizing the use of other forms of energy — including hydropower; geothermal power, which is used effectively in countries such as Iceland; solar power; wind power; and biofuels — is part of the answer for such countries. All that, however, depends on the development of human resources through education. An educated population has more capacity to look for answers than an uneducated population.

As far as Uganda is concerned, in addition to lazy individuals, the only groups that are adversely affected by high food prices are salary earners in towns. Unlike farmers, they cannot benefit from higher food prices; yet they must buy food. Fortunately, however, all such families in Uganda have a dual capacity: in addition to being salary earners, they or their relatives own land in rural areas. They can therefore subsidize themselves by growing food using that land. Africa and other regions with agriculture-based economies should rise up, utilize their full potential and take advantage of high food prices.

Regarding the statement that I have heard repeated so many times since the opening of the present session of the General Assembly — that no African country can achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by 2015 — I would like to make two positions clear. First, the statement confirms what I said yesterday at the high-level meeting on Africa's development needs. Discussing sustainable development without discussing socio-economic transformation is not correct. We have repeatedly pointed that out. I have often used the example of pregnancy: one cannot talk endlessly about "sustainable pregnancy". Yes, pregnancy should be sustainable until it transitions into a baby. Therefore, as Europe did, and as other societies in Asia have recently done, Africa must metamorphose socially, economically and technologically from a pre-industrial, sometimes feudal, society into a middle-class and skilled-working-class society, period. Achievement of all the MDGs would be the consequence of such a metamorphosis.

One cannot maintain a pre-industrial society and somehow achieve the MDGs. An industrial society is what Uganda has been working towards over the past 20 years. Africa must industrialize, develop a modern services sector and commercialize agriculture. That means that emphasis must be placed on market access. It means that we should not only gain access to the major markets of the world, but also rationalize our own African markets through regional and continental integration. It also means that, in order to lower the costs of doing business in Africa, we should deal with energy; transport, especially by rail; and primary and higher-level education. Achievement of the MDGs would be a consequence of these developments, rather than a precursor or a phenomenon extraneous to them.

Mr. Yáñez-Barnuevo (Spain), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The second position that I would like to point out regarding the MDGs is that Uganda is on course to meet all of them except those related to maternal health and child mortality. I see no reason why those Goals should not be achieved. With the exception of combating HIV/AIDS — which is behaviour-related — I am sure that all the others are achievable if we in Uganda do enough political-led sensitization and investment.

I do not associate myself with those who are pessimistic about Africa or with those who put the cart before the horse. Why, for instance, were industrialization and value addition not made one of the MDGs? The export of raw materials is one of the cardinal sins that cause Africa to contribute only a 2 per cent share of world trade. If value were added to those raw materials, Africa's share of world trade would rise, even today. Africa is exporting many things, but they are in the form of raw materials; that is why their value is 2 per cent. If value were added to those raw materials, their value would rise.

Moreover, that would create jobs for Africans and therefore contribute structurally to poverty eradication. How are we supposed to eradicate poverty without creating jobs, other than by using witchcraft? We have repeatedly pointed out these issues in several forums, to no avail. It is Africans themselves who can and should resolve them.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Uganda for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Yoweri Kaguta Museveni, President of the Republic of Uganda, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Bharrat Jagdeo, President of the Republic of Guyana

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Guyana.

Mr. Bharrat Jagdeo, President of the Republic of Guyana, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Bharrat Jagdeo, President of the Republic of Guyana, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Jagdeo: I join with those who have spoken before me in congratulating General Assembly President d'Escoto-Brockmann on his election to guide the work of the Assembly at its sixty-third session.

As we meet this week, the global financial system is confronting its sternest test in recent memory. The current crisis is systemic in nature, historic in scale and global in reach. It comes at a time when the world economy is still wrestling with the most rapid escalation, and the highest real levels ever recorded, in the prices for fuel and food commodities. Together with the world's belated attention to the devastating economic and social implications of climate change, those developments define the agenda before global institutions and national leaders today. They make the theme for this year's debate both timely and necessary.

Given the gravity and urgency of the issues before us, we must be careful not to conduct this year's debate in the customary rhetorical manner. Instead, we must resolve to translate the detailed analysis, lofty statements and good intentions for which the Assembly has become well known into concrete actions that the current circumstances demand of us, and on which history will judge us.

We must each, as countries approaching the podium to speak, be prepared to account for the pledges we have previously made. We must also be bold enough to embark on a project to achieve real change in the multilateral system. That change must be based on mandates that are relevant, institutions that are accountable and a context that is increasingly reflective of integration and interconnectedness.

Indeed, I would urge that the theme of the next General Assembly should emphasize accountability and coherence of action on the part of the developed world in matters related to aid, trade and development. Often, when taken together, the policies of those countries result in a significant net loss of welfare in the developing world and run counter to their declared intentions — for example, the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by 2015.

An episode that manifested itself merely two years ago as a moderate decline in the housing market in some parts of the United States, and that evolved into difficulties for that country's sub-prime mortgage market, has now grown into a rapidly deepening systemic financial crisis of global proportions. Even if they are not fully integrated into the global financial system, small vulnerable economies such as Guyana will bear the full effect of those developments as demand for exports tightens, the cost of capital rises, foreign direct investment becomes scarce and tourist arrivals and migrant remittances decline. In short, economic growth and poverty reduction efforts will suffer a severe setback and the Millennium Development Goals will become even more elusive.

At the same time, crude oil prices rose by 148 per cent during the 18 months preceding July of this year. In turn, that has contributed to increasing prices for food commodities — in particular for such staples as cereals — rising in some cases by more than 200 per cent during the same period. While there have been some signs in recent weeks of those increases tapering off, and in some cases reversing marginally, the outlook clearly suggests that high prices for energy and food are here to stay.

Without a doubt, increased food prices provide an important opportunity and incentive to farmers and agricultural economies to increase production. However, they also present grave implications for access to food, in particular by the poor and, by extension, for key nutrition and health indicators among our populations.

The 2007 *World Development Report* shows that growth generated by agriculture can be up to four times more effective in reducing poverty than growth in other sectors. Yet the share of agriculture in official development assistance fell from 17 per cent in 1980 to just 2.9 per cent in 2006. Agriculture must therefore be given high priority in the international agenda as well as in national budgets.

It is also urgently necessary for large developed countries to re-examine ways in which current inefficient and distortionary trade policies, in particular subsidies that support inefficient domestic production and tariffs that protect against more competitive imports, can be restructured to reduce distortions in the global marketplace.

Given the impact that persistently high food prices into the future will have on the poor, the global community must commit itself to designing and funding appropriate safety nets to ensure improved access to food and the maintenance of basic nutrition.

In recent times, the Assembly has been deeply concerned about the consequences of climate change, and rightly so. But future generations demand that that concern be translated into rapid action. The climate change challenge will not slow down to meet the pace set by the United Nations. Our response must speed up to meet the pace of climate change.

The facts are straightforward. If we are to avoid catastrophic climate breakdown, we need to stabilize annual greenhouse gas emissions at about the equivalent of 2 tonnes of carbon dioxide per capita by 2050. Therefore, let the debate move on to how we make that happen, and not stagnate on a paralysing fear born from the magnitude of the problem.

There are some promising signs. The Kyoto Protocol has resulted in the emergence of a $60 billion carbon market, which is a welcome start. But although common sense dictates that those financial flows should be proportional to the problem being addressed, the bulk of that money stays within the developed world.

As a rainforest country, Guyana is particularly aware that there is virtually no capital flowing to address tropical deforestation — despite the fact that it causes 20 per cent of greenhouse gas emissions and, as analyses done by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, Nicholas Stern and others have highlighted, doing so is the most cost-effective abatement solution. That is because the Kyoto Protocol contains no significant incentives to slow the rate of tropical deforestation.

As leaders, we must set a clear direction for our negotiators as we send them to agree a post-Kyoto climate agreement, one that asserts a sense of proportionality in addressing the causes of climate change and ensures that all major mitigation options are pursued. We must also break the false debate that suggests that countries must choose between combating climate change and supporting national development. Instead, we need to forge new high-growth, low-carbon economies and make national development supportive of progress towards global emissions targets.

Specifically, those of us who are leaders of rainforest countries need to understand that we provide services that are vital to the health of our planet and that, when we seek capital flows to compensate for that, we are not merely acting as passive poor countries looking for aid: we are providing a critical component of the climate solution and we should be leading the design of mechanisms as we forge a post-Kyoto climate agreement.

In Guyana, despite the fact that 85 per cent of our people live below sea level and are already suffering from changing weather patterns and rising water levels, we do not want to just complain about climate change. Instead, we want to partner with others to create a solution. As part of that, we are ready to discuss placing almost our entire rainforest in the service of the world if the right economic incentives are created and if that can be done in a way that neither trades sovereignty over our forest nor restricts the legitimate development aspirations of our people.

The African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries are currently negotiating an economic partnership agreement with the European Union (EU). That agreement may fundamentally affect development in our societies and jeopardize our future negotiating positions at the World Trade Organization (WTO). The European Commission has threatened to impose tariffs on our exports under the Generalized System of Preferences if we do not sign agreements that reflect the EU's model of WTO compatibility, even though the model includes issues that have been removed from the WTO agenda — the so-called Singapore issues. Those agreements will also seriously prejudice our negotiations with other countries and may jeopardize the future of our integration movement.

The exploitation of the EU's superior negotiating strength and the use of threats to get countries to sign are, ironically, how the EU hopes to start this partnership under the economic partnership agreement. What is particularly irksome is that we are incessantly lectured by the same group of countries to the effect that national consultations and working with civil society are essential hallmarks of good governance. Yet when the same civil society opposes the economic partnership agreement on the grounds that it is not sufficiently developmental in nature, we are told to ignore them — they are complainers. I wonder if the leaders of those countries know, or care, what is being done in their names. Even at this late hour, I wish to plead with the EU leaders to review those agreements before they irretrievably harm the good historic relations that have existed between the ACP and the EU.

That brings me to the matter of the much-needed reform of our multilateral institutions, which has been on the agenda for some time. However, it would be fair to say that it has progressed slowly and its results have been few and difficult to observe. I believe that the reforms must be pursued along certain predefined principles. First, the institutions must have new mandates that are relevant to the current circumstances, and they must have at their disposal tools to discharge those mandates effectively. Secondly, the institutions must have legitimacy and reflect an equitable representation of their membership. Thirdly, in the discharge of their functions, they must demonstrate flexibility and responsiveness. Fourthly, they must display the highest standards of accountability and transparency.

As I mentioned earlier, I believe that limitations in the mandate and functioning of the international financial institutions were a contributory factor in the current financial crisis. The mandate of the International Monetary Fund should explicitly be the preservation of systemic financial stability as a global public good. In addition, the use of passive surveillance as a general instrument and conditionality-based lending among the more vulnerable members have clearly proved to be ineffective. That is so not least because the incentives associated with conditionality-based lending are almost invariably never applicable to countries of systemic importance, and no mechanisms exist to encourage larger countries to respond to policy advice.

Likewise, the World Bank should have a revised mandate that focuses on certain key development challenges, such as protection of the environment, clean energy and certain aspects of poverty reduction, instead of trying to address every development challenge and undermining its own effectiveness. In addition, more needs to be done to democratize the institutions, to align the interests of the management and staff with those of the countries they serve and to make them more accountable to the membership.

Similarly, a more democratic and reformed United Nations Organization will be better placed to play a central role in the multilateral system in serving

the interests of the international community as a whole, whether in relation to its peace and security mandates, the protection of fundamental rights or the promotion of development.

Within the Commonwealth, heads of Government have developed a set of principles and guidelines that should underpin reform of the international institutions. Among their recommendations is a call for a conference along the lines of Bretton Woods to lead the way in determining the future of the international financial institutions. I trust that those principles and guidelines will be fully embraced.

I wish this sixty-third session of the Assembly every success.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Guyana for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Bharrat Jagdeo, President of the Republic of Guyana, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Mikheil Saakashvili, President of the Republic of Georgia

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Georgia.

Mr. Mikheil Saakashvili, President of the Republic of Georgia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Mikheil Saakashvili, President of the Republic of Georgia, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Saakashvili: I welcome the opportunity today to address this sixty-third annual gathering of the Assembly at such a critical moment in the history of my own country and of the United Nations.

Sometimes, the most extreme tests of this institution's towering ideals arise in small, faraway places, of which we know very little. I come to you as the representative of one of those places — the country of Georgia, a land of fewer than 5 million that last month was invaded by our neighbour. Despite our small size, the legal, moral, political and security implications raised by that invasion could not have greater consequences.

Indeed, those issues cut through to the heart of the founding Charter of the United Nations. The principles enshrined in that Charter include the inviolability of sovereign borders, the sanctity of human rights, the supremacy of international law and the global rejection of armed aggression.

All of those principles were put to the test by the invasion and now hang in the balance. The invasion violated Georgia's internationally recognized borders. At the very beginning of the aggression, we clearly told our own people and the world that the spirit of the people of Georgia would not be broken and that we would never give up freedom and never surrender. We never did and never will. The subsequent recognition of the so-called independence of our two regions — South Ossetia, with a population of less than 20,000 in the areas that Russia controlled, and Abkhazia, with a population of less than 50,000 ethnic Abkhaz — in order to punish our country and send a signal to the rest of the world, not only challenged our territorial integrity but also defied common sense and the elementary principles of international interaction. The ethnic cleansing of hundreds of thousands of our people violated the very idea of human rights.

This General Assembly, therefore, faces a general challenge. We are called upon not just to respond to the particular question of one instance of armed aggression in a single place but to define our attitude towards armed aggression in all places. We are called upon to answer the momentous question: will this body stand up for its founding principles, or will it allow them to be crushed under the treads of invading tanks, under the boots of ethnic cleansers, under the immobilizing impact of cyberattacks and under the pernicious tactics of violent separatism?

What would it mean for every member of this Assembly to defend the underlying principles of the United Nations?

First, each of us must refuse to stand silent in the face of this armed aggression and assault on human rights.

Secondly, we must stand united and immediately adopt a policy of non-recognition towards Georgia's two breakaway provinces, currently occupied and

annexed by the aggressor. Together, we have both a moral and a legal obligation to protect international law and the world order.

Thirdly, we must ensure that all parties comply with the full terms of the existing ceasefire agreement.

Fourthly, and lastly, we must resolve to create a meaningful United Nations conflict resolution process that will peacefully reunify Georgia and solve the problem.

The bottom line is this: we must be ready to use the full power of international law and of our collective international institutions to uphold the historic balance of justice and thereby set in motion a series of actions to right these historic wrongs.

While the crisis poses grave challenges for the entire international community, it creates specific obligations for my own country. I would argue that the answer to that new assault on our shared values is not a closing up or a circling of the wagons, but rather greater openness on many fronts. As a democracy, we have nothing to fear. As a democracy, we have an obligation to our people and to the international community to be even more open and transparent. For me and my Government, that commitment translates into a series of specific actions at both the international and the domestic levels. Allow me to explain.

First, I know that there are many people in the world who seek a clearer understanding of how this war started and who started it. Rather than recite our case, let me repeat the simple invitation that I first made on 17 August while standing next to German Chancellor Angela Merkel, who visited Georgia immediately after the unleashing of hostilities, when I proposed that there should be an exhaustive independent investigation of the origins and causes of this war.

Investigators must have unimpeded access to all officials, documents and intelligence. Georgia welcomes such an investigation. My Government is ready to share every piece of evidence and to provide access to every witness sought by investigators. We call on the other party to this conflict to fully cooperate and not to obstruct the investigation. That is how democracies behave. The truth must come out, not only to clarify how events unfolded last month but also to help us to answer the fundamental questions that this invasion has raised.

My Government's second initiative of openness involves developments within our borders. Whereas others waged this war with arms, we will wage it with values. Georgia was attacked because it is a successful democracy in our part of the world. Our response today is to make our democracy even more robust. That is why I am announcing to the Assembly four categories of expanded democratic initiatives.

First, we will strengthen the checks and balances of our democratic institutions, including granting greater independence to parliament and to the judiciary. Secondly, we will provide additional resources and protections to foster greater political pluralism, including by increasing funding for opposition parties and ensuring they have greater access to the airwaves. Thirdly, we will strengthen the rule of law by introducing enhanced due process, trials by jury and lifetime judicial appointments. Fourthly, we will expand and deepen protections for private property. In everything we do, we will be transparent.

This morning, I was honoured to learn that, in Transparency International's latest index, Georgia was among the few countries to have risen significantly in the rankings over the past year. Indeed, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development ranks Georgia among the least corrupt economies in Europe.

Despite all the turmoil, my country has endured. That proves the resiliency and irreversibility of our democratic commitment. In short, we will fight the spectre of aggression and authoritarianism with the most potent weapon in our arsenal, namely, our commitment to ever-expanding freedoms within our own borders. That amounts to nothing less than a second Rose Revolution. If our first revolution was about meeting a threat from within by reinventing a failed State riddled by corruption, our second revolution must be even more focused, as we now face an even greater challenge — one that comes from the outside. The success of the first Rose Revolution helped save my country. The health of the international order could well depend on the outcome of the second Rose Revolution.

Countless people throughout the world were deeply moved and profoundly troubled by the invasion of Georgia, which began, with tragic irony, on the eve of that great celebration of peace, the Olympic Games. On the most basic level, the world responded with passionate humanity to the plight of ordinary

Georgians under siege; to the sight of 80-year-old men and women driven from their villages; to the hundreds of thousands of innocent souls taking shelter from bombings; to a small country of less than 5 million people being trampled by a neighbour 300 times its size. The world responded immediately by sending generous aid, by coming to Georgia and by showing its solidarity. Meanwhile, leaders from around the world have been working tirelessly to negotiate and enforce a ceasefire.

I am especially grateful to President Sarkozy of France for his dedication to ensuring that the ceasefire is fully implemented in letter and in spirit. As all parties have agreed, that means the full withdrawal of all military forces from my country to their pre-conflict positions.

The world's actions proved that the most potent response to this brutal invasion is to rebuild Georgia's democracy and economy, making them even stronger than before. I want to make a special commitment to all those who, during these especially difficult economic times, are helping to fund Georgia's reconstruction: we will spend their resources wisely, well and with full transparency.

Georgia will rebuild. It will contribute to the prosperity and security of all its citizens and of the entire international community by providing stability in our part of the world and serving as a model for democratic development. Reconstruction will also ensure that Europe continues to benefit from the true energy security that comes from diversification. And everything we do will be done peacefully.

But today we must ask a series of questions, the answers to which have grave consequences. We have all wondered in recent weeks: was this invasion an aberration or a misguided attempt to resort to the nineteenth-century logic of brute force, or was it a sign of an ominous new trend, one that could continue and deepen to undermine the international order of the twenty-first century, eroding State sovereignty and the power of our common and hard-fought principles? I believe that that question and others have not yet been answered. Others still need to be asked.

Will we encourage violent and hateful separatism around the world, standing aside when State sovereignty is subverted, or will we draw a clear line and defend the principles that uphold the international order and declare, enough? In the twenty-first century, we have better ways to protect the rights of ethnic minorities than with T-72 tanks and Sukhoi fighter jets.

We have developed a body of legal and political examples to accommodate minority demands within the context of national sovereignty. After all, that is one of the great achievements of the United Nations, of the European Union and of other multilateral and regional organizations. Its foundation is the belief that democracy and prosperity provide room for all. Are we ready to throw all that away?

And what of the use of brute force? Will we look the other way or reward the dispatch of tens of thousands of troops and hundreds of planes across internationally recognized borders to bomb another country? Will we cover our eyes when ethnic cleansing occurs, as it has over and over again for the past 16 years in Abkhazia and South Ossetia? In a world that struggles to reign in traditional forms of State violence, will we sanction new ones?

During the invasion of Georgia, we witnessed several terrifying new twists in the waging of war. We saw proxy forces and militias cynically unleashed to ethnically cleanse the population of my country, operating without any restraint and outside any order. We demand a thorough United Nations investigation of the crimes against humanity, war crimes and human rights violations that have been committed.

We have experienced the first full-scale cyber warfare campaign, which was aimed at crippling my country's economy and our ability to communicate with the outside world. It is profoundly distressing to see the technology that has woven our world together and helped to bridge cultures being used to divide ethnic groups and to tear our world apart.

Today, when most of the world understands the existential threat posed by climate change and ecological destruction, we in Georgia have witnessed a sickening campaign of ecocide as part of the invasion. That occurred when combat helicopter gunships continuously dropped firebombs on old-growth forests in the Borjomi National Park, which comprises our national centre for tourism, recreation, culture and water resources. I believe that, together, we have the solemn responsibility to deliver answers to those questions. We will succeed. Let us resolve to bring the right conclusions to the world.

The invasion of our country provided an impressive demonstration of the power of global public opinion, which can find expression only when societies are open and free. Ultimately, what stopped the tanks and troops from taking our capital was the international disapproval voiced by so many here, by the free media, by courageous human rights groups and by leading voices of the world's conscience, from Natan Sharansky to Václav Havel.

Rhetoric, however, is no longer enough; today, we must act. If words were sufficient, then something might have come from the many calls for peace and the countless warnings that I myself have made from this rostrum over the years. No one has fought harder than my country and myself to heal the ethnic rifts in Georgia and to bring about a peaceful resolution of the conflict, and we will continue to fight forcefully.

Indeed, in this very place, I have warned so many times that this situation was in the making — that there was a threat. Four years ago, we were discussing the dangers posed by the illegal Russian build-up in our country aimed at our territories. We spoke about the distribution of passports and about the illegal bases built on our territories. We knew that those subversive tactics, combined with the ethnic cleansing that had driven most Georgians from those territories, would one day be used as a pretext for invasion. And that is precisely what happened last month. It is also happening in other countries in our neighbourhood.

In 2006, I urgently drew attention to the attempts being made to annex Abkhazia and South Ossetia, and I asked whether any members in this great Hall would tolerate such interference by another Power on their own soil. I warned of the risk that "a Pandora's box will be opened, unleashing violent separatism and conflict not only in the Caucasus but across many parts of our globe" (*A/61/PV.16, p. 4*). Today, unfortunately, we stand at that very precipice, where peace could yield to a pernicious new world order.

One year ago, I came to this Hall with even more distressing news: that an illegal new military base was being built in South Ossetia by those who hoped that arms and violence could triumph over the will of the people. I noted that that dangerous escalation was taking place under the very noses of the international monitors whose job it was to demilitarize the territory, and I asked that those reckless acts be countered. Our warnings continued in the months and weeks before the invasion. We told anyone who would listen about the campaign that had been unleashed to slander Georgia and my Government while blocking any meaningful negotiations with the separatists. That was part of a calculated effort to weaken international support for Georgia and to lay the groundwork for the invasion.

We gave the international community the details of a sharp military build-up by the purported peacekeepers — a build-up that began this spring in both conflict zones, leading to armed attacks this summer by separatist militias. Just before the land invasion began in the early hours of 7 August, after days of heavy shelling that had killed civilians and peacekeepers, we urgently sought to refute claims that 2,100 South Ossetian civilians had been killed by Georgians. That was the excuse used by the invader for what it called a "humanitarian intervention" — a profound perversion of the responsibility to protect. That lie, which was subsequently debunked by Human Rights Watch — which estimated that 44 had been killed — and others, was an attempt to conceal the true motives for the invasion.

Over the years, I have also spoken many times to you about the plans that Georgia has developed, together with the international community, to peacefully reunify my country. I have spoken about the urgent need to replace and transform the failed frameworks for negotiation and peacekeeping in our region. Repeatedly and with sincere intent, I have extended my hand to our large neighbour.

Just a few days before the invasion of Georgia, we continued to work furiously for peace. The Secretary-General had sent his Special Representative to Georgia to determine how to fix the broken process of conflict resolution, and we cooperated closely with him. The German Government had proposed peace talks for mid-August — talks that my Government eagerly supported. The Finnish Chair of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe also proposed talks in Helsinki in late July, to which we subscribed. Unfortunately, the opposing parties to the conflict repeatedly turned their backs; they had other plans in mind.

Finally, on the eve of the invasion, my Special Envoy travelled twice in desperation to South Ossetia to plead for peace. His counterpart from our neighbouring country failed to come to those meetings. He cited a flat tire as the reason for not showing up.

Within 24 hours, thousands of very full tires were rolling across the border of my country.

So words alone are not nearly enough. Nor can words accurately convey the horrors of war. It is difficult, if not impossible, to say that anything good can ever come of war. The value of human life is incalculable, and we in Georgia grieve not only for our own lost sons and daughters, but also for our fallen neighbours who were sent in to carry out an unjust aggression of war.

Yet, the international community has emerged from the invasion of my country with something truly valuable: finally, clarity. We understand what has happened. We can no longer deny the motivations and intentions of those actors who instigated the war. With clarity comes responsibility. We no longer have any reason for inaction. Now each of us has a responsibility to act.

Despite the destruction wreaked by the invasion — hundreds dead; nearly 200,000 displaced, according to the United Nations; our economy disabled — my Government is putting our convictions into practice. I promise to you that my Government will implement with all due speed the new democratic initiatives that constitute the second "Rose Revolution". I promise to you that Georgia will soon be stronger and more democratic than ever before, and thus that it will be in a better position to contribute to our collective security and prosperity.

However, if that is to have any meaning, we must together defend the principles on which this institution was built. We need actions, not words. Allow me to repeat once again the four commitments that, I believe, we must make. First, each of us must refuse to stand silently by in the face of this armed aggression, occupation, ethnic cleansing and assault directed against a United Nations Member State. Secondly, we must stand united in rejecting the forced and illegal recognition of Georgia's two separatist provinces and what is essentially their annexation by its neighbour. Thirdly, we must ensure that all parties comply fully with the existing ceasefire agreement. Fourthly, we must resolve to create a meaningful conflict resolution process that will peacefully reunify Georgia and resolve the conflict, in the interest of all ethnic groups and minorities, our society as a whole and the region.

If we can accomplish those goals, then this institution will emerge from this crisis stronger than it was before. If, however, we fail to stop the violent tactics that have subverted State sovereignty in Georgia, they will spread to other parts of the world. It is our collective responsibility to respond with conviction and resolve.

Georgia has made its choice, and our democracy will emerge stronger as a result. Together, we will find ways, as we have over the millennia, to ensure peaceful coexistence among all members of our multiethnic society, be they ethnically Georgian, Abkhaz or Ossetian. We have been a Christian country since the fifteenth century, but we are also a country in which many different religious groups and communities coexist. Diversity is our strength, not a source of our weakness. We are willing to strengthen our diversity even further in order to make my country successful and whole once again, rejuvenated and rebuilt.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Georgia for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Mikheil Saakashvili, President of the Republic of Georgia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

The President returned to the Chair.

Address by Mr. Evo Morales Ayma, President of the Republic of Bolivia

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Bolivia.

Mr. Evo Morales Ayma, President of the Republic of Bolivia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Evo Morales Ayma, President of the Republic of Bolivia, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Morales Ayma (*spoke in Spanish*): This meeting of the United Nations is being held at a time when there is a rebellion of peoples throughout the world, a rebellion against poverty and destitution and against the effects of climate change, against the privatization policies that have caused the financial crisis.

I wish to tell the Assembly that in Bolivia in recent years we have experienced great uprisings by our people, social movements from the countryside to the cities, of indigenous workers and farmers questioning economic models and systems that simply privatized natural resources and steadily sacked the country. The privatization of basic services and the policies imposed by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) did not solve anything for the majority of Bolivians. I came to the presidency in 2005 and 2006 as a result of that struggle by the social movements, which was accompanied by an ongoing labour and social struggle by our Bolivian comrades and brothers who were seeking equality and social justice.

With a little experience I can say that in the two and a half years of my Government we have nationalized the natural resources, such as oil and gas, and the economy is beginning to change profoundly. In 2005, before I was elected President, the Bolivian State received only $300 million for its oil and gas resources. Last year, 2007, after nationalization and after we changed the hydrocarbons law, the Bolivian State received $1.93 billion. Being a small country with about 10 million inhabitants, that enabled us to improve the national economy. The recovery of our natural resources is so important that that has been the goal of a historic fight by our peoples.

I wish to speak about some results with regard to social issues and about some profound changes in democracy that took place with the participation of the workers in various social sectors. However — and I am certain that in the last few days the world has been able to grasp this — there is an ongoing conspiracy of small groups against this process of change. I want it known that since the first day of my Government some conservative parties that favour imperialism have consistently tried to weaken us and to wear us down. Last year they requested a referendum to recall the President. I accepted that calmly, and instead of my being recalled, some prefects and some opposition authorities were recalled by the Bolivian people. I received the support of 67 per cent of the people in the recall referendum of 10 August 2008.

I should like to recall something important that our forefathers used to say — our leaders who fought for control of our land, people such as Tupac Catari. In 1741 we were cut into pieces by the Spanish invasion. Before Bolivia was founded and before dying, our leader said, "I die, but I will return transformed into millions of people". For the first time a President of the Bolivians has received more than 2 million votes. So the statement of Tupac Catari, the leader of our ancestors, has come true. But that was part of a process of change in the democracy, with the awareness of the Bolivian people.

After 13, 14 and 15 August, that small group of conservatives began to organize a coup d'état of municipal authorities and prefects against the Government and the State. I will quickly list some of those events. On 14 and 15 August there was a meeting of a so-called national coordinating committee of the right, which attempted to prevent the national authorities from reaching four regions of the country. They attacked the departmental command of the national police, and there was an attack on the police subcommander. A roadblock was set up in four regions to cut off food supplies for the population. Oil installations were surrounded. There was a general attack on institutions, and in four departments 75 government offices were taken over. The State radio and television were silenced, especially the community radios. The airports were taken by those groups.

I remember that, when I was a boy, in the military dictatorships the coups d'état began with takeovers of the State television stations. History is repeating itself, but thanks to the conscience of the Bolivian people this civil coup in Bolivia has been defeated. Thanks to the participation of the nations that have now come together in the Union of South American Nations, this attempted civil coup d'état has been defeated.

Here, I would like to say something. Surely, some participants are waiting for me to tell them why we expelled the United States ambassador. Europe and Latin America repudiated the attempted civilian coup, but the Government of the United States did not, nor has it denounced those acts of terrorism. This morning I heard the statement of the President of the United States condemning terrorism. In Bolivia, right wing groups are setting fire to gas pipelines and cutting off the valves for the export of gas to Brazil and Argentina, but the embassy of the Government of the United States does not condemn such acts of terrorism.

It is not hard to imagine that, if some social movement were to steal his country's national wealth, the United States ambassador would condemn, denounce and repudiate such an act. I would like to

hear the representatives of the United States Government denounce these acts of terrorism. Of course, the terrorists know that the United States is their ally. It is never going to condemn them. The ambassador of the United States was clearly the primary human element conspiring against the United States Government. I remember perfectly the year 2002, when I was a parliamentarian. On the instructions of the United States embassy, I was expelled from Parliament. I was accused of drug trafficking and of being an assassin. In 2002, the United States created a governance programme through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) to finance the strengthening of the conservative political parties and put the brakes on a growing political liberation movement, a political movement for the sovereignty of our peoples, a political movement that was designed to bring an end to injustice and to seek equality for Bolivians.

I also remember — some participants may not recall it clearly — that in 2002, when I was called for the first time to be a candidate for the presidency, the United States ambassador said: "Do not vote for Evo Morales. If you vote for Evo Morales, there will be no international aid or international cooperation", thereby instilling fear in the Bolivian people. And they did not stop there. They also said: "Evo Morales is the Andean Bin Laden, and these farmers are the Taliban". Hence, standing before this Assembly is an Andean Bin Laden who represents the Taliban, which is the indigenous farmers' movement that historically fought for its claims.

There are so many accusations of that kind. When we came to power, we found a CIA office in the Government palace. After we discovered it, we had no problem getting rid of it because we had no need for a CIA office in the palace. Obviously, they were operating from there. For example, in 2004, they wanted to force the National Congress to give diplomatic immunity to civilians or members of the Bolivian military. We rejected that, of course, thanks to our social cohesion. In 2005, they began dismantling the military's missiles, together with some commands and, of course, the administration in place at that time.

Dismantling the military is treason; it is not possible that the Southern Command of the United States armed forces would practice such a policy. However, they continuously tried to control some members of the military. For example, in previous Governments, they created a special counter-terrorism force, the F-10, and at one point in time their representatives informed me that, in 2005 or 2004, they were prepared to kill labour or political leaders who opposed capitalism and imperialism.

When I appointed a commander, he was vetoed by the United States embassy. Of course, we are not going to allow any more vetoes. Last year, special firearms munitions were illegally brought into the country at the instigation of the commander of the United States military group, Colonel Campbell. We were told that these were missiles for training purposes. Moreover, they illegally employ young students belonging to United States peace groups to carry out spying activities on officials of the Governments of Cuba and Venezuela. They are working in secret against the Government of Bolivia, thus violating the constitutional rights of their own United States citizens who come to Bolivia on scholarships.

I would point out that when one works for equality and for social justice, one is persecuted and conspired against by certain groups. These groups are not concerned about human equality. It is clear that this is a historic fight for our peoples and that it is nothing new. We can speak about the economy, or about the cost of silver as an industrial commodity, but what we are talking about is the fight between rich and poor. It is the fight between socialism and capitalism. That historic struggle is being resumed now, but I feel that these battles are uprisings and rebellions of peoples against an economic model — against the capitalist system. If we do not understand that capitalism is destroying humanity, then I am sure — and I hope that no one will be offended — that we will not solve the problems of life, the problems of the planet or the problems of humanity.

I am not accusing anyone of being an accomplice of capitalism. From a communal and labour struggle to an electoral one, from organizer to President, I have become perfectly aware that capitalism is the worst enemy of humanity. As I said a few days ago, with great sincerity, while touring my country, I was brought up in social movements among workers, farmers and indigenous peoples. More than 500 years ago, our forefathers fought colonialism and imperialism, and that is why I am anti-imperialist today. No one is going to move me from that position. If people like me, they like me a lot, but if they do not

like me, so be it. What the world is going through is unjust.

So much has been said about climate change, flooding, droughts, how our mountains are losing their snow. If we continue in this way, we will all be responsible for destroying the planet, and thus humankind.

I have heard good statements from other presidents participating in this debate, from which I have learned a great deal; but I am sorry to say that I do not believe that it is enough to simply raise the problems unless we also provide the solutions. I would like to say that some blacklists have been drawn up to punish Governments.

It is difficult to imagine that those terrorists groups are not condemned, while the national Government is decertified for supposedly being involved in drug trafficking. According to United Nations reports, some countries are increasing their coca plantations, but they are not on decertified lists because they are pro-capitalist. To those countries that support the counter-narcotics struggle by reducing their coca cultivation, we did not say that there would be no coca, but that there would be no free cultivation of coca, since the coca leaf does have medicinal and nutritional benefits. Once we clearly defined our anti-imperialist position, we were decertified. However, I am quite sure that this is not about certification or decertification, terrorist or non-terrorist countries.

Mr. Bush, President of the United States, sent me a message recently in which he wrote: "If I am not a friend, I am an enemy". I do not care whether I am a friend of the President of the United States, but I am a friend of the people of the United States. I have had many meetings with representatives from social movements in the United States and we agree on our approach to life and humankind. That is why we have to put an end to blacklists. We are living in times where there are no empires, no dominance or imposition of economic models that can greatly harm countries or continents or the whole world.

I wish to say that we have begun to work on a proposal. It is called "Ten commandments to save the planet, humankind and all life". I hope that my colleagues will distribute this document, and with the participation of all it will help us save the planet, humankind and life. One of the first subjects we raise here is how we can put an end to capitalism. Wherever there is capitalism, there is exploitation. Wherever there is capitalism, our natural resources are plundered. That is what we have seen and experienced.

Our second point is that we must denounce war. As everyone knows, we are working arduously to put Bolivia back on track by drafting a new constitution. In that new political constitution for the Bolivian state, for the first time the State and the people of Bolivia will constitutionally pledge never to initiate war. That does not mean that we renounce defending ourselves. I do not believe in wars.

Speaking of war, I am sure that peoples do not want wars. They do not want the military intervention of any country in any part of the world. In our new political constitution for the Bolivian State, we propose that Bolivia should not accept the military base of any country of the world on its territory. In that way, we shall assert our dignity and defend the sovereignty of Bolivia and of other peoples. I have very respectfully suggested to the people and the Government of the United States that it would be best to withdraw their military from Iraq and Afghanistan and other parts of the world as soon as possible. If they do not, the peoples themselves will expel them because interventionism and war are no solution for life and humanity.

Our third point is a proposal for a world without imperialism and colonialism. Last year, I heard a critical issue discussed here by several heads of State. That issue was water — water as a right of all living beings. We also heard discussions on energy and how important it is to have clean, environmentally friendly energy.

Speaking of nature, the indigenous peoples have experience living in harmony with Mother Earth and nature. Mother Earth is neither a shopping centre nor a commodity. Thus, the historic struggle of our peoples is for land and territory, and that struggle is being repeated in our country.

Our next point, as I said earlier, is to Mother Nature within the United Nations. I hope that can be taken into account. I would also note that the new Bolivian political constitution incorporates the ten commandments to save humanity and the world.

Basic services should be human rights. Water, light and telecommunications cannot be in private

hands. If they are human rights, they should be a public service and not left to the private sector. To be sure, we have many differences with multinationals. Investment is certainly important, but we need investors in Bolivia who are not the owners of our energy and our oil, but who are our partners.

My next point is that we should consume only what we need and prioritize local consumption in the context of food sovereignty. We also need to respect the diversity of cultures and economies.

Our final point concerns how to live well. What does it mean to live well? Living well is living in equality, solidarity and complementarity, eliminating inequalities between families and the deep-rooted disparities that exist among countries and continents. When we try to live better, sometimes all we do is to become selfish and ambitious. We never think about the larger family, which, for us in Bolivia, is the whole of Bolivia.

The struggles of peoples for democracy and for the re-establishment of the rule of law is being repeated in Bolivia. In the past, great social movements led by indigenous farmers brought down dictatorships. In recent days, they defeated an attempted coup in Bolivia, and we hail them. We have just been informed that social movements are wisely mobilizing themselves in a search of peace and asking that new standards be adopted to ensure equality be for all Bolivians.

In conclusion, I wish to say that I am convinced that only the conscience of the people can defeat the interests of certain groups and United States imperialism. I heard some leaders this morning sue for peace with a regulated, moderate form of capitalism. I do not believe in that. There will be peace only when there is equality among all human beings; there will be peace only when our identity and the dignity of every people are respected.

I do not think there can be peace with capitalism, no matter how moderate or regulated. We need to work together, we need to participate in the struggles of our peoples for equality. Only Governments and leaders working together with their peoples can find equality. When we have equality, there will be social peace throughout the world.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Bolivia for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Evo Morales Ayma, President of the Republic of Bolivia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Hifikepunye Pohamba, President of the Republic of Namibia

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Namibia.

Mr. Hifikepunye Pohamba, President of the Republic of Namibia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Hifikepunye Pohamba, President of the Republic of Namibia, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Pohamba: I congratulate you, Sir, on your election as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-third session. We support the priorities that you have identified for this session. I wish to express Namibia's appreciation for your predecessor, Srgjan Kerim, for focusing the agenda of the sixty-second session on matters of crucial importance to Member States. We commend the Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, for tirelessly taking up the challenging issues of peace, security and economic development.

The sixty-third session of the General Assembly is taking place at a time when the global economy is dominated by four interrelated crises. I have in mind the financial crisis in the industrialized countries, the global energy crisis, the devastating impact of climate change as well as the food crisis which has adversely affected poor people around the world. Other, no less daunting, challenges are the HIV/AIDS pandemic, underdevelopment and abject poverty, as well as the need to foster peace and security around the world. We must act decisively and collectively at national, regional and global levels to overcome these challenges.

The devastating effects of climate change have become present-day realities in all parts of the world. Namibia has experienced the negative impact of climate change. The floods and droughts during 2007 and 2008 were some of the most devastating in recent

times. In their wake, they left poor harvests, livestock losses, environmental degradation, damaged infrastructure and destroyed livelihoods, thus putting a severe strain on our plans to invest in new development projects.

Namibia is committed to the Bali road map in order to conclude the negotiations on the post-Kyoto regime by 2009. We call on all parties to honour their commitments under the Kyoto Protocol, including the immediate and full capitalization of the Adaptation Fund. Namibia will play its part in the lead-up to Copenhagen.

We want to contribute to making Copenhagen a success in terms of commitments and substantial mitigations, financial instruments for adaptation efforts in developing countries and mechanisms for sharing and harnessing appropriate technologies.

As a net importer of food and fuel, Namibia has been hit hard by the soaring prices of commodities. There will be catastrophic increases in the incidence of hunger, malnutrition and infant mortality in developing countries unless the trend is reversed. That calls for a decisive national, regional and international response. In our case, the Government of Namibia has exempted some basic foodstuffs from value-added tax in order to mitigate the effects of higher prices on food. Such interventions can provide some relief to households. However, there remain long-term challenges, which demand appropriate policies and substantial new investment to raise agricultural productivity and increase food production around the world.

There is a real risk that the gains made by developing countries in poverty reduction and the attainment of the other Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) over the years will be reversed if we do not act rapidly.

Global efforts to address the food crisis, the impact of climate change and the drive to achieve the MDGs must go hand in hand. In that regard, we support the proposal for the General Assembly to hold thematic debates until 2015 to take stock of success achieved and setbacks encountered in the achievement of the MDGs.

That will give development cooperating partners an opportunity to account for the fulfilment of their commitments. On the other hand, developing countries should also account for their commitments to strengthen democratic institutions, enhance good governance and fight corruption.

There is a need for genuine political will, especially among donor countries, if the MDGs are to be attained. In this context, open, predictable and non-discriminatory trading and financial systems must be developed. We call for the intensification of the implementation of the Global Partnership for Development as agreed upon at Monterrey in 2002.

We also appeal to the Bretton Woods system and other international financial institutions to create special mechanisms to enable middle-income countries to access financial resources for development on concessional terms. That was called for by the Windhoek Declaration on Development Cooperation with Middle-Income Countries.

The scourge of poverty is one of the most serious challenges facing humanity today. I believe that, with the requisite political will, poverty can be overcome. Let us act in unity of purpose to address not only the manifestations of poverty, but also its underlying causes, which make communities vulnerable. Let us harness the technological, financial and other resources necessary to eliminate the dehumanizing effects of poverty on all members of the human family.

Peace and security as well as social justice are paramount to the achievement of the MDGs and to the resolution of conflicts. In that regard, all countries must commit themselves to implement the policies that promote economic growth, social justice, the rule of law, democracy, respect for human rights and the protection of the environment, in order to guarantee durable peace and security.

Mr. Beck (Solomon Islands), Vice-President, took the Chair.

On 15 September 2008, the political leaders of Zimbabwe signed a power-sharing agreement designed to restore political and economic stability to their country. We wish to congratulate the leaders of Zimbabwe on that important milestone and to express the hope that it will put that sister country on the path towards economic recovery. We commend the mediation efforts of the Southern African Development Community, led by President Thabo Mbeki of South Africa, who invested extraordinary skill, time and energy in the process. We urge the international community to support the implementation of the

agreement by providing economic, financial and humanitarian assistance. We call for the immediate lifting of all sanctions that have been imposed on that country.

My delegation is concerned that the question of Western Sahara remains unresolved. We support the ongoing direct talks between the parties under the auspices of the Secretary-General. We also call for the implementation of the United Nations settlement plan for Western Sahara and of all relevant United Nations resolutions providing for a free and fair referendum in that territory. Namibia is also concerned about the conflict situations in the Darfur region of the Sudan and in Somalia. We urge the respective parties to those conflicts to work to find lasting peace.

The people of Palestine have an inalienable right to self-determination. Namibia is concerned about the lack of progress in the negotiations on the question of Palestine. We call for the immediate implementation of all United Nations resolutions on Palestine and for the establishment of an independent State of Palestine living side by side with Israel.

My delegation reiterates the call that we have made on several occasions in this House for the unconditional lifting of the economic, commercial and financial blockade against Cuba. Not only is the blockade against international law; its extraterritorial nature impedes free trade and economic development. Namibia calls for the implementation of all resolutions of the General Assembly calling for the lifting of the blockade.

If we are to be able to respond effectively to the manifold challenges of our time, we must accelerate the reform of the United Nations. Member States should work with resolve to strengthen our Organization and to ensure that it delivers in terms of its mandate. However, the process will not be complete without reform of the Security Council. We have an obligation to make the Council more representative, democratic and accountable. It is an anomaly, and it is unjust, that Africa does not have permanent representation on the Security Council. Namibia reiterates the African common position on Council reform as articulated in the Ezulwini Consensus and the Sirte Declaration. Intergovernmental negotiations on reform should commence without any further delay.

It is our duty to ensure that the United Nations remains true to its unique universal character and that it becomes a source of hope for a more secure and peaceful world for current and future generations.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Namibia for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Hifikepunye Pohamba, President of the Republic of Namibia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Boni Yayi, President of the Republic of Benin

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Benin.

Mr. Boni Yayi, President of the Republic of Benin, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Boni Yayi, President of the Republic of Benin, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Yayi (*spoke in French*): I warmly congratulate the President on his election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its sixty-third session. Benin, my country, will make its modest contribution to the work of this session and will strive to promote the ideals of the Charter, to which my country here reaffirms its full commitment. His predecessor strove to find ideal solutions to the great challenges facing humankind during his mandate. We pay tribute to him for his good and faithful service to the international community.

I also wish to commend the diligent and resolute efforts of the Secretary-General, who has understood the scope of the grave crises that have shaken the world over the past year. Thanks to his bold initiatives to promote international cooperation, he has been able to revive the virtue of multilateralism as the best way to manage world affairs in an inclusive and participatory framework highlighting the uniqueness of our world and the shared responsibility of the human species to maintain the fundamental equilibriums on which its survival on the Earth and the permanence of the biosphere depend.

In 2007, responding to the alarm raised by the scientific community, we focused our attention on

climate change as a global problem affecting the environment on our planet, with far-from-rosy prospects for the future of humankind and obvious consequences in our daily lives. The two major crises that we have been attempting to contain for several months are unfolding against that backdrop. The energy and food crises, both of which are on our agenda, are two of the world's most serious crises in recent history. They mark a departure from our previous certainty as regards uninterrupted and lasting supplies of energy and food for our peoples.

The Secretary-General has demonstrated outstanding leadership by sounding the alarm and warning us of the risks of hasty and non-viable responses that could lead to panic and serve to exacerbate the situation. The Rome Conference organized under the aegis of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations made it possible to undertake a comprehensive assessment of the complexity of the crisis and to develop an outline for a comprehensive strategy. That strategy includes immediate steps to address the emergency, as well as several cohesive measures in the short, medium and long term to preserve peace and stability in vulnerable developing States. Those are the countries most affected by the food crisis, which undermines their efforts to combat poverty and hunger.

The response to the food crisis emergency should not lead us to lose sight of the timetable for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. The international community has a duty to mobilize the necessary resources to correct the serious distortions that are at the heart of the food crisis. Our performance in that regard could be improved if vulnerable countries were able to make the investments necessary to relaunch agricultural production throughout the world in a sustainable manner.

In addition, there is a need to maintain sustained growth rates that can produce prosperity and sustainable human development in the long term. We must continue to work to achieve the Millennium Development Goals and make them a lasting reality.

In this emergency, the United Nations should bring to bear all its influence in order to help countries experiencing difficulties ensure the survival of threatened and vulnerable segments of the population, who risk being decimated by hunger and famine if no one comes to their aid.

The time has therefore come to give concrete expression to the right to food. It is intolerable that hunger continues to be a scourge afflicting humankind in the twenty-first century. In the short term, priority should be given to strengthening social protection systems in least developed countries. Our efforts should make it possible to activate the dormant potential of local productive capacity in order to stimulate small and medium-sized businesses. Problems must be addressed through an integrated approach that makes it possible to maximize agricultural production, as well as of preserving, bringing to market and distributing food crops in order to improve the living conditions of the most vulnerable groups of the population, whose welfare we must effectively ensure. In the medium and long terms, we must rethink agricultural investment policies in order to re-establish the balance between cash crops and food production, so as to ensure food security for States while taking cultural specificities into consideration.

Overall, this crisis illustrates that humankind is not well equipped to manage the consequences of the unfolding emergency. This proves that we are not doing enough for the future and that we run the risk of being subject to all sorts of ills. It is for that reason that the proposal made by the High-Level Task Force on the Global Food Security Crisis for an increase in the proportion of official development assistance allocated to agriculture from 3 to 10 per cent constitutes a strategic approach that should be implemented with common political will commensurate with the stakes involved. I would like to pay tribute to the countries that have already made firm commitments to provide additional resources in that regard.

Benin is being seriously affected by the food crisis, but we are resolutely committed to undertaking the necessary reforms. To that end, in 2006, my Government launched a national agricultural modernization programme in order to address heightened distortions. To date, agriculture in Benin has been characterized by small-scale family farms and based on the use of outdated equipment. In order to change that situation, which has confined food production to subsistence farming, a year ago my Government initiated a mechanization programme to improve the competitiveness of the agricultural sector.

Given that that mechanization alone cannot bring about the expected results without the marshalling of water resources, we are considering a programme for

rational water management to better utilize that resource while preserving it for the future. The goal is to promote irrigation agriculture, primarily by building irrigation dams in valleys in the north of our country as part of an overall development plan.

Soil degradation, coastal erosion and the combined effects of frequent flooding due to climate change that seriously affect all of West Africa are among the underlying factors contributing to the drop in local food production. In that connection, I should like to express our great appreciation for the awareness-raising efforts of the secretariat for the Convention to Combat Desertification.

Financing mechanisms, including the World Bank's Adaptation Fund, must function with a heightened sense of the urgent need for aid to affected regions. They should promote the implementation of soil regeneration projects, irrigation agriculture and reforestation with species that will increase the availability of basic foodstuffs.

As part of efforts to promote diversification in the agriculture sector, my Government also intends to encourage the cultivation of crops suitable for biofuels on marginally arable lands. The goal is to reduce dependence on hydrocarbons, which has become more acute following the dramatic drop in the generating capacity of hydropower plants as a result of climate change, whose impact has seriously affected economic activity in my country over the past two years. These difficulties have been exacerbated by the dizzying rise in oil prices.

The tax cuts and import subsidies to which my country has resorted in order to protect the buying power of taxpayers have had a negative impact on public finances. Those stop-gap measures are simply not sustainable in the long-run.

This year we are commemorating the sixtieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Benin initiated resolution 62/171, which the General Assembly adopted to proclaim the International Year of Human Rights Learning, which will begin on 10 December 2008. My country proposed that new approach in order to once again place the human person at the very centre of sustainable human development efforts. Human rights learning leads to increased demands for human rights, which society is supposed to provide. It is the duty of the international community to guarantee them. We call upon all Member States to give real effect to the International Year, in line with their national specificities, as well as to take all the steps they believe necessary to promote ownership and the effective enjoyment of human rights by all individuals on their territory.

The activities that will take place during the International Year of Human Rights Learning will provide additional impetus to the efforts we have undertaken to ensure that all citizens subscribe to the Millennium Development Goals, especially in Africa, where the risk of not meeting the Goals by the established deadline is the greatest.

We welcome the recommendations of the Steering Group for achieving the MDGs in Africa. Benin is honoured to be one of the 10 pilot countries chosen. Benin has begun to integrate the concept of "united in action" within the framework of its cooperation with the United Nations system and eagerly awaits its inclusion in the second group of test countries for the implementation of the recommendations of the High-level Panel on System-wide Coherence. This will enable us to develop synergies to accelerate the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

At the national level, we have integrated the achievement of the MDGs into our national development strategies, which are based on attaining those Goals as part of a sustainable development process focused on and sustained by our nation and aimed at supporting economic growth, which will enable us to achieve lasting success.

We welcome the ongoing consideration of ways to enhance the effectiveness of development assistance, and we hope that this will enable us to develop a consensus vision on the best possible way to revitalize the global partnership for development, with the ultimate objective, in our view, of reducing the scandalous inequalities which still afflict humankind.

It is clear that democratization of the United Nations and the promotion of the rule of law at an international level are endeavours which will contribute to the effective and efficient participation of all peoples in managing world affairs, for the benefit of present and succeeding generations. The promotion of the rule of law at the international level requires the increased representation of developing States in the decision-making bodies of the international financial institutions, as well as a redefinition of their

institutional mandates to ensure that better use is made of them to mobilize resources for the development of the least developed countries, while preserving the stability of the international financial system.

The democratization of the United Nations also includes the long-awaited reform of the Security Council. As a hostage of the inherent contradictions of today's international relations, it has remained hopelessly stuck, even though it is recognized as being of cardinal importance to the effectiveness of the Organization. The negotiations to that end should be carried out with a heightened sense of responsibility. We must ensure equitable representation of Member States within the Security Council. I reiterate here the legitimate demands of Africa, as expressed in the Ezulwini Consensus, within the framework of reform aimed at ensuring transparency, legitimacy and increased effectiveness of the Council's decisions as it discharges its primary role in maintaining international peace and security. The democratization of the United Nations also means a firmer commitment by Member States to respect international and national legality.

In conclusion, I wish to make an urgent appeal to all parties to the armed conflicts that continue in various hotspots throughout the world, whether they be in the Middle East, Asia, Latin America or Africa, to choose the path of peace and dialogue and to respect democratic values.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Benin for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Boni Yayi, President of the Republic of Benin, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

The meeting rose at 7.35 p.m.

United Nations A/63/PV.7

General Assembly

Sixty-third session

Official Records

7th plenary meeting
Wednesday, 24 September 2008, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. D'Escoto Brockmann ..... (Nicaragua)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Beck (Solomon Islands), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 9.10 a.m.

Address by Mr. Mahinda Rajapaksa, President of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka.

Mr. Mahinda Rajapaksa, President of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Mahinda Rajapaksa, President of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Rajapaksa (*spoke in Sinhala and in Tamil; English text provided by the delegation*) Sri Lanka congratulates the President on his election to this high office. We are confident that your guidance will enable the General Assembly to make progress on the important issues confronting humanity to make the work and role of the United Nations more relevant to the lives of billions of people.

While my mother tongue is Sinhala, let me elaborate a few thoughts in Tamil. Sinhala and Tamil are the two languages of the people of Sri Lanka. Both have been used through the centuries, are rich in literature and are widely used in my country, with recognition as official languages. With the widening of democracy in our country, the bonds between the Sinhala and Tamil people of Sri Lanka will grow stronger and remain a major force for its future development. We will march towards a richer freedom and the lasting unity that await us as a nation.

The theme of our debate — "The impact of the global food crisis on poverty and hunger in the world as well as the need to democratize the United Nations" — is indeed far-sighted. It focuses on one of the critical survival needs of humanity, as well as one of the key institutional needs of the world body. The global food crisis has become a frightening actuality and has the potential to assume even more dangerous proportions if we fail to take urgent and collective action. Similarly, a less democratic United Nations runs the risk of being less effective and less credible, while giving rise to major concerns about its legitimacy.

Through a series of projects with regional impact, Sri Lanka will contribute to the goal of increasing food production, investing more in agriculture and research and sharing technologies and best practices. That is an integral part of the rural empowerment that is so essential in the developing world, as the vast majority of our people are rural based and depend on agriculture for their livelihoods. Achieving food security would require strengthening and revitalizing the agriculture sector. That calls for the empowerment of small- and medium-scale farmers through a series of measures. Those represent vital collective steps by all of us in the

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United Nations system. Sri Lanka sees self-sufficiency as the answer to overcoming the food crisis and giving strength to nations. No longer can we expect farmers in developing countries to be mainly producers for export markets.

In that context, implementation of effective social safety nets remains a priority as reassurance and empowerment. That is why we have introduced social security measures such as the fertilizer and fisheries subsidies. The advice given by some powerful countries and powerful institutions are contrary to that. Yet it is necessary that we pay no heed to such advice and determine to do what is best for the innocent people of our countries.

As the current Chair of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), I have the honour to state that at the recent summit we affirmed our resolve as a region to make our own contribution to grapple with the food crisis and to make our region revive its historic critical role in food production by once again becoming a major granary of the world. We also decided on the immediate establishment and operationalization of the SAARC Food Bank. That mechanism, we believe, will help considerably to ensure both food and nutritional security for the people of South Asia. That initiative will contribute to the larger global efforts that we launched in Rome, in June this year, to avert and mitigate the impact of the food crisis.

We must also find solutions to the energy crisis that are both equitable and pragmatic. Energy supplies must be diversified by developing advanced, cleaner, more efficient and cost-effective technologies for both fossil fuels and renewable energy sources. We need to engage in energy conservation and accept the reality of dependence on fossil fuels for much longer.

Equally obvious is the imperative of transferring new technology to the developing countries. In our own region, we will use increasing resources of human and scientific talent to produce our own technologies, making the best use of the natural resources, the sun, wind and the ocean, which we have in abundance, free of the restrictions of the marketplace. The demands of humanity can no longer be allowed to be at the mercy of speculative or captive markets.

To that end, Sri Lanka's own view is that the United Nations and its agencies must take leadership in developing a framework for international cooperation. We urge caution in the rush to use biofuels to break our dependence of fossil fuels. It has already been seen that the rush to biofuels has contributed to high food prices. Sri Lanka's policy is that no arable land should be diverted or directed to the production of biofuels, however profitable that may be in the short term. It was propitious that Sri Lanka acted with courage and foresight over the last three years, without being cowed by many pressures, and thus did not confront any situation where our people had to face hunger or starvation.

On climate change, SAARC leaders reiterated the need to redouble efforts within an expanded regional framework for environmental protection, conservation and justice. We stressed that we should contribute to restoring harmony with nature, a part of the heritage of South Asia. We humans have interfered with nature too much for too long. We must accept that the dangers of climate change are man-made and that its solutions, too, require man's intervention.

Since the promulgation of the Charter of the United Nations to save succeeding generations from the tragedy of war, at least the major threat of intercontinental war seems to have receded. However, the just struggle of the Palestinians for statehood continues.

Today, the United Nations and its peoples are confronted with the fast-spreading menace of terrorism, which manifests itself in various forms in Asia, Africa and Latin America. The United Nations has a grave responsibility to save today's and succeeding generations from that new and continuing menace. We have been talking for long enough; it is time for clear action in that regard.

Like many other countries, Sri Lanka has not been spared this global menace. Exploiting perceived ethnic grievances that must and can be addressed through political means, a well-organized terror group, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), engages in blatant and brutal acts of terrorism, including suicide bombings, to seek negotiating leverage, political recognition and legitimacy.

I am saddened by the loss of life and destruction caused by the recent terrorist attack in Pakistan.

Our Government has always been ready to address the causes of these issues and effectively implement political and constitutional solutions to

meet the aspirations and respect the rights of all communities. What the Government would not and could not do is to let an illegal and armed terrorist group, the LTTE, hold a fraction of our population, a part of the Tamil community, hostage to such terror in the northern part of Sri Lanka and deny those people their democratic rights to dissent and free elections. Through our past actions, we have proved it.

The Government has therefore declared its policy of engaging in dialogue and discussion with the democratic leadership of the Tamil community, a people who have lived in harmony with other Sri Lankans for centuries. Today, there are Tamil leaders holding responsible ministerial posts in my Government. A former Attorney-General of then Ceylon, Sir Ponnambalam Ramanathan, a beloved Tamil politician, had this to say at a public meeting in Colombo in September 1904: "I have been to many countries in the world. But nowhere have I seen such a friendly race as the Sinhalese, who also uphold high moral values." Such was the harmony between the Tamils and the Sinhalese. But a malicious group has turned all of this upside down.

All successive Governments of Sri Lanka have endeavoured to resolve the problem for over 25 years, including through Norwegian facilitation and international co-chairs overseeing a so-called peace process that was treated with contempt by the terrorists. On each occasion that talks were held seeking peace, the terrorists of the LTTE walked out on the flimsiest of pretexts and reverted to terrorism of the worst kind, indiscriminately targeting innocent civilians.

Our Government will only be ready to talk to that illegal armed group when it is ready to commit itself to decommissioning its illicit weapons, dismantling its military capability and returning to the democratic fold. The Government has also made it clear that the elected Government cannot and will not permit the undermining of the territorial integrity of the sovereign United Nations Member State of Sri Lanka and the division of its territory. We are clear in this message.

The Government's objective is to enable the people to enjoy the benefits of democratic processes and to speed development activities in those areas where there is a heavy presence of terrorists. That would be similar to the fast-tracking of economic development taking place in the Eastern Province of Sri Lanka, where former terrorists now serve as democratically elected Provincial Councillors, and a former child soldier conscripted by the LTTE is now the elected Chief Minister, having abandoned terrorism and embraced democracy.

Significantly, the restoration of democracy in the East of Sri Lanka was achieved in less than one year of it being freed from the clutches of terror.

Our Government has also sought and received the cooperation of the United Nations, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and other agencies to help us in providing humanitarian assistance to internally displaced persons (IDPs) and other affected civilians. The Secretary-General's Representative on IDPs, who visited Sri Lanka some years ago, said:

> "Sri Lanka presents the unusual situation of a central Government providing relief aid to persons under the control of the main opposition group. In a world replete with examples of Governments and rebel groups using food as a weapon against civilian populations, the situation in Sri Lanka is one that deserves closer attention if not more publicity as an important precedent." (*E/CN.4/1994/44/Add.1, para. 67*)

The Government of Sri Lanka continues this humanitarian policy even today, although we know that the terrorists seize a good proportion of those humanitarian supplies. Our supplies are not confined to food; they extend to medicines and all other essentials as well as schools and hospitals, with teachers, doctors, nurses, and all other essential staff. That is not all; the Government also purchases the paddy and other foodstuffs produced in those areas. I do not think there is any country in the world where there is a Government that provides such humanitarian assistance to terrorists that attack it. Our Government considers the supply of humanitarian relief to its people as its prime responsibility.

The complex situation in Sri Lanka needs to be addressed and resolved through an appropriate process of deterrent law-and-order action and patient political efforts of consensus-building. We have achieved the difficult but essential task of building peace in the Eastern Province and are confident that it can be done in the north as well.

This session of the Assembly is a good time to take stock of progress made towards the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) around the globe. It is regrettable to note, as we do so, that most are behind schedule. The slowing down of global economic growth, financial turmoil and speculation, rising food and fuel prices and the impacts of climate change are clear obstacles. Also, sanctions imposed on the leaders of some countries, and on their leadership, based on their political role, following protests, are in fact, targeted at the innocent people of those countries.

The steadily growing menace of international terrorism, with related activities such as the smuggling of illegal arms, human trafficking, drug trafficking, money-laundering, and business empires run by terrorist groups undoubtedly undermine the fundamentals of humanity and civilization. It appears that steps taken by us to eradicate such illegal activities have not been effective. This further complicates all national and international efforts at moving towards realizing the MDGs. Terrorism, as I have emphasized many a time, by its very nature, pushes back even our modest achievements.

Another similar menace is threatening to devour our children, the most valuable asset of any nation. That is the insecurity of cyberspace which has not only helped corrupt the minds of our children but also exposes them to predators such as paedophiles, drug dealers and pornographic sites. Sri Lanka has banned pornographic and similar destructive sites from being available through Internet service providers. We are also controlling and restricting the use of mobile telephones for such damaging activities. That is an important area for world leaders to focus on.

It is important that urgent and collective actions, both short- and long-term, are taken to stem those adverse trends. Only such determined and concerted actions will enable progress to be made towards the realization of the agreed development goals, including the MDGs, and frustrate elements that are bent on reversing the gains made.

We must deeply commit ourselves as Members of the United Nations to forging a way forward from the limitations not seen by those who laid the foundations for this great institution of humankind. If we fail to do it now, future generations will curse us.

I wish to conclude my address with a verse from the Dhammapada, words from the Enlightened One:

"Victory breeds hatred,

The defeated live in pain.

Happily the calmed live,

Having set victory and defeat aside."

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Mahinda Rajapaksa, President of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Victor Yushchenko, President of Ukraine.

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of Ukraine.

Mr. Victor Yushchenko, President of Ukraine, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Victor Yushchenko, President of Ukraine, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Yushchenko (*spoke in Ukrainian; English text provided by the delegation*): It is a great honour for me to address the world community: the United Nations and its biggest representative body, the General Assembly.

Together with all other Member States, I am grateful to the Macedonian representative Mr. Srgjan Kerim for his effective work as President of the Assembly at its last session.

I congratulate Mr. Miguel d'Escoto Brockmann of Nicaragua on his election as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-third session. I wish him every success at this critical time.

I am confident that we all have the same feeling. Empty words and general discussions have had their day. We feel a cool wind in international relations that complicates and tempers mutual responsibilities. The difference in temperature and pressure leads to a hurricane. Atmospheric changes in worldwide politics have comparable effects.

The great illusion of power becomes today's ultimate weakness and the giant vehicle of ideals and shaping forces. The principal challenge before us lies in the neglect and undermining of the standards of international law and foreign affairs.

We see a trend towards the demolition of the global system, whose cornerstone is the unflagging international will and respect for the sovereignty, territorial integrity and established boundaries of States.

Ukraine has the right to speak these words. We were among the founders of the United Nations and one of the co-authors of its Charter.

We are a nation that underwent fatal trials and regained a commonwealth in a legitimate and recognized way. The representatives of dozens of States that share such a fate with us are here in this room.

The latest events in the Caucasus are of the utmost concern to us. I express condolences for the tragedy suffered by each human being and each family regardless of race or allegiance — Georgians, Ossetians and Russians. Suffering does not discriminate among peoples. Each person has dignity and the ability to recognize truth, hypocrisy, deliberate aggression, manipulation of public opinion and candid support for separatism.

Ukraine condemns all acts of aggression and use of force that occurred in the region. Ukraine vigorously denounces violation of the territorial integrity and inviolability of the Georgian frontiers and the armed annexation of its territory.

Ukraine does not recognize the independence of the self-proclaimed republics of South Ossetia and Abkhazia. Ukraine does not acknowledge, and condemns, the attempt at illegitimate and separatist affirmation of the statehood of any territories. This position is fundamental for Ukrainian foreign policy.

Deviation from the United Nations principles, such as the use of force, and the renewal of cold-war rhetoric provoke our deep concern. Those processes create a potential threat both for Ukraine and for other countries in the region.

The problem cannot be solved through isolation, self-isolation or mutual accusations. There is only one way out. With common and good will we are to consolidate our values and the aims contained in the United Nations Charter and the Millennium Declaration.

With full responsibility for peace and security, we need to stop disturbances by separatist spirits, which can turn into misfortune for the instigators themselves. It is essential to reject blackmailing and threatening vocabulary. Ukraine rejects pressure of any kind regarding ways to ensure its own security and to determine membership in collective security structures. Such attempts at infringement are short-sighted and counterproductive.

We call for the strengthening of the role of the Security Council, the only body with exclusive authority in issues of global peace and security. We need its decisions to be balanced and its actions to be effective.

Ukraine supports all efforts aimed at peaceful settlement and unblocking of the situation on the South Caucasus and will fully cooperate in that process. We will continue our peacekeeping activities firmly and vigorously, and we will participate in the settlement of the protracted conflicts on the basis of respect for the principles of sovereignty, territorial integrity, inviolability of borders, human rights, freedoms and dignity.

The world is waiting for a confident and positive response from the United Nations. The world needs renewed confidence in our collective efforts and strict adherence to the norms of international law and to the United Nations Organization.

Our national agenda is concordant with the main challenges facing the international community. As a country possessing the best black-earth soil in the world, Ukraine is going to contribute tangibly to the common work on solving the global food crisis.

We plan to consolidate all possible efforts to realize an effective and just energy policy. The principles that should be implemented are mutual benefit, the continuous fulfilment of obligations and the inadmissibility of any energy pressure.

We reinforce our call for more active global cooperation in the sphere of the environment. Ukraine puts forward an initiative to develop a binding framework agreement — a World Environmental Constitution — and to establish a single-structure system for ecological and environmental protection.

with relevant authority and mechanisms in the United Nations.

We plan to revitalize efforts in the fight against HIV/AIDS and other dangerous diseases. This problem remains highly topical for Ukraine.

Undoubtedly, Ukraine will continue to keep an eye on the whole range of common tasks and challenges, from poverty problems to trafficking in human beings, international terrorism and proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

The line we follow is clear. Our policy is based on democratic values, open dialogue with all partners of different cultures, and unconditional respect for fundamental human rights. I have the honour to appeal to the world community with a request for solidarity.

This year Ukraine will mark the seventy-fifth anniversary of the Great Famine — the Holodomor, which took the lives of about 10 million of our compatriots. Our intention is not directed against any people or State. We neither overstate nor understate our sorrow. The tenor of hunger in Ukraine was oriented towards genocide and was accompanied by the total elimination of the national elite, the public leadership and the priesthood. The goal was to overpower a nation of millions, because according to the regime, there were too many people to displace to Siberia.

It is important that our steps encourage other countries of the former Soviet Union to find the truth. We share the pain of all the people affected — Russians, Belarusians, Kazakhs and dozens of other nations. We invite a joint commemoration of each national tragedy and no toleration of new attempts to create a heroic aureole around Stalin and his regime. We have invaluable examples of mutual understanding with Poland, Hungary and other States. Honest and sincere memories about the past have not split us but have united us. It is our aspiration that memories of the victims of the Holodomor and other crimes of totalitarian regimes will prevent the world from repeating such catastrophes.

I believe in our ability to respond effectively to every challenge the world is facing. Ukraine is determined to work on this. We will act as dedicated partners. Everything is in our hands. I believe in our power, will and wisdom.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of Ukraine for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Victor Yushchenko, President of Ukraine, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

The President took the Chair.

Address by Mr. Fernando Lugo Méndez, President of the Republic of Paraguay

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Paraguay.

Mr. Fernando Lugo Méndez, President of the Republic of Paraguay, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Fernando Lugo Méndez, President of the Republic of Paraguay, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Lugo Méndez (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the nation of Paraguay, I wish to express to you, Mr. President, my most sincere congratulations on your election to preside over the General Assembly at its sixty-third session. I wish you every success.

This is a place where every year the Powers of the world write history that should transcend mere lofty political prose and be a tool for verse — the poetry of eliminating hunger, embracing equity among nations and building a better world for all. I believe that, one day, these enormous buildings — which were built with the aim of preventing war — will be increasingly dedicated to providing bread, eradicating hunger and malnutrition throughout the world and saving millions of lives from disease and violence of all kinds.

After 61 years of single-party Government and for the first time in my country's political history, a party has come to power via the ballot — the appropriate means under the democratic code. Paraguay is soaring on the winds of democratic change that are blowing through the region. The new Government that I represent is an unequivocal response to the many needs that have arisen and opportunities that have been lost in recent decades. This year, citizens voted for greater social justice, to halt the

massive destruction of the environment, and to combat the corruption, shady dealings and favouritism of a weakened and opportunistic State that delayed the implementation of a sustainable and inclusive development strategy for years.

The new administration represents the end of our 19-year transition to democracy and has embarked on reform of the State and the economy. It has encouraged citizens to participate in the political decision-making process. We understand that political and economic stability is not more important than social stability. That is why we are committed to applying social policies to combat extreme poverty. We cannot hope for sustainable development when the market and the State deny opportunities to the weakest, nor is it possible to sustain democracy when the vast majority are excluded from enjoying economic benefits. We therefore believe in economic growth with social equity and in environmental responsibility as the very heart of our public policies.

Paraguay has opened a door of opportunity to the world. Two weeks ago, before we had come to the end of our first month in power, my Government launched a major assault on illicit Government management. The mafias that enjoyed shameful and excessive wealth through their influence on public power are enduring the worst moment of their history in Paraguay. We do not rule out the possibility of stripping the ill-gotten gains from those whom scandalous wealth made millionaires overnight and are now digging in their heels and even hatching specific plots to foment political and economic instability. The political holdovers in Paraguay still cling to a fascistic style of patronage, to which my Government has responded firmly but calmly. We will show zero tolerance for any anti-democratic activity and close our doors to all blackmail and any attempt to revive outdated models of access to power.

The new Government, which came to power on 15 August, has been proactive in a historic show of solidarity with the democratic peoples of Latin America and in its rapid response in defence of democratically elected Governments, such as in the sister Republic of Bolivia, in the context of the Union of South American Nations. We also thank those brotherly countries that stood with us in the face of potential instability and have expressed their concern for and solidarity with the Paraguayan process.

The only way to build economic relations has been through a market mechanism which sold Latin America on the financial speculation of the 1980s that sunk our continent in debt, sidelined the role of the State and widened the gap between rich and poor. That mechanism, which was forced upon us, has proven to be wrong-headed and very costly for our peoples on the social level.

Today, we are seeing a financial crisis in developed economies as a result of immoral speculation that also affects the well-being of peoples. The sole motive behind such speculation is the desire for greater wealth that privatizes benefits and socializes the costs of unregulated market economies.

Paraguay is in favour of strengthening the General Assembly and restoring its mandated attributes and functions under the United Nations Charter. As the most representative body of the Organization, the Assembly must become a true world parliament in which the major issues affecting humankind can be discussed and are not relegated to other bodies whose decision-making process is confined to a small number of countries that often fail to take the opinion of the majority of the membership into account.

Paraguay believes that the problems that have led to climate change call for short- and long-term world responses in line with the most recent scientific advances and applied in a fashion that is compatible with the economic and social development of each country affected. Countries with economies in development suffer in particular from vulnerability and isolation as they attempt to enter the globalized market.

Ironically, it is the poorest — those who are the least responsible for climate change — who suffer most from its consequences. When it comes to major responsibility, we often note the irony of conservation measures imposed on areas of the world that are already suffering from poverty and exclusion. At the same time, we note the sustained indifference and limited capacities for self-criticism in the political realms that manage the fate of the world. That is precisely where the principal industrial and consumption phenomena arise, creating societies that, due to the irresponsibility of their leaders, persist in depleting their own resources, their own lands, their own dreams and their own lives.

Paraguay therefore calls on countries to recognize their shared but differentiated responsibilities. We

stress the need for all members of the international community to act on their pledges. The same is true in determining political and economic responsibility for the deterioration of the world — the irreplaceable home of humankind.

At the same high level as our concern for the structural and immediate causes of poverty is our concern for the situation of indigenous peoples. Not only are they poor and excluded, but in many regions of the continent they have not reached a level of civic inclusion that permits them to be involved in decision-making processes. In many cases, those who uphold a discourse of inclusion are intolerant when our indigenous brothers take on political leadership roles.

The indigenous nations of Latin America are not the ancient creation of our continent, but the most vital potential for political action, which we must respect, promote and include. If we did not, that would be an intolerable attack against our own civilization. America must wake up in the face of all of that.

We need to account for the old debt, which began to accrue in the filthy bowels of the slave ships and continued to grow with every gesture of disdain towards any indigenous attempt to have their say, their vote, their dreams and their plans for the land that at one time was theirs alone. Recognizing indigenous peoples as participants in the political and participatory processes of the State is still a pending issue, and it is a sad expression of intolerance in many regions.

In Paraguay, we have begun a process of transparency that has no precedents. The media are playing a fundamental role in this process. They were very proactive in combating corruption in Paraguay, and today, because of their questioning of our management, they are working at a high standard to generate ongoing self-criticism. As we guarantee the most unconditional support for enlightened management in journalism, self-expression and the right to access information, we seek to open up better horizons for the communications and education media, which had always been persecuted or dismissed as of no importance in our country.

We must work to build a more just world through social engineering. It is time to go beyond statements that are incapable of showing clear signs of progress in the fight against poverty and exclusion. The world's forums for debate and reflection cause strain and risk losing credibility if they do not lead to actions that can draw a smile on the faces of unemployed youths who have no future. It is sad to see migrants who wander in an incessant exodus of biblical proportions, or to see women who are relegated to a secondary position by a culture and a civilization unable to recover the original dignity that belongs to them, who give life, affection, creativity and courage to change the world.

We need to highlight food security by ensuring not only space and opportunities for self-managed production, but also its cultural, sovereign and national identity dimensions. We are calling for greater, better and more timely international assistance for agricultural and fishing production in order to ensure increasing food production without destroying the environment and avoiding the current rise in food prices. Those costs end up punishing primarily the most vulnerable groups. On the global scale, we call upon nations that are heading huge agricultural projects to recognize the tribulations of small local producers, who often are crushed by new models that are arrogantly imposed on them.

The question of landlocked developing countries is a fundamental issue in Paraguay's foreign policy. The disadvantages and asymmetries that that geographic situation has generated and continues to generate can be remedied only through international recognition and the granting of special, differentiated treatment in the country's insertion into a globalized world.

Paraguay believes that the upcoming midterm review meeting of the Almaty Programme of Action is extremely important. It is an opportunity to consolidate achievements made so far and to ensure greater commitment from international bodies and from more developed countries. Working together in a coordinated matter will help landlocked developing countries overcome their limitations.

In Paraguay, large corporations — the Itaipu with Brazil and the Yasyreta with Argentina — offer abundant and available electric energy. Our Government is committed to prioritizing and using these renewable resources for economic and social development of the country in such a manner as to complement our efforts to create better sources of work, more production and a reduction of poverty. We are operating in a framework of increasingly fluid dialogue with our brotherly countries, with which we share those power stations, so that the benefits can

repair the social debts deserving our attention and become true factors for economic growth.

Taking into account the upcoming review of the financing for development process, which will take place in Doha at the end of the year, Paraguay calls for the international community to mobilize its external resources to provide decisive support for the development of small economies. That is a priority both for both international financial bodies and developed economies. We would like the call for just international trade to become a true impetus for development.

Many of our countries have communities in various places in the world. Just like Europeans who in the past century came to America, today many friends and families from our regions seek better prospects in the countries of Europe and in North America. We call upon the humanitarian, brotherly, hospitable sense — the same that our continent showed in the past in sharing its scarce resources — in nations that today take in our migrants, who are dreaming of having a job and the right to a dignified life, far from their countries. The human dimension of that drama calls for a frank dialogue with receiving countries to find a solution to this new drama of globalization.

The Republic of Paraguay believes that, although progress has been made towards the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), we cannot deny the existence of the inequalities that persist in the developed world. Millions of people continue to live in extreme poverty, a situation that is worsened by the sudden increase in the cost of food and fuel and the consequences of climate change.

In order to achieve the MDGs by 2015, we are calling for strengthening the combined efforts of Governments, civil society organizations and the private sector in the context of a global alliance for stronger and more effective development, increasing official development assistance for the most vulnerable economies in particular.

We must not forget the thousands of millions of human beings worldwide who live below the poverty line. In our Latin American subcontinent, poverty has risen to 44 per cent of the population. In Paraguay, 35.6 per cent of our citizens suffer from this scourge, and of those almost 20 per cent live below the line of extreme poverty. Malnutrition now affects four out of every 100 Paraguayan children. This situation is unacceptable and demands a radical change in the approach taken to combat this state of affairs. The most disadvantaged, those who remain in the sidelines of development are the ones we must listen to, and alleviating their suffering must be our priority.

Today more than ever, Paraguay requires international cooperation in achieving its socio-economic priorities, in developing and strengthening its institutions and in providing preferential attention to the most vulnerable sectors. We hope that the opening of developing countries will favour the most disadvantaged and that the same restrictions demanded in the development of more developed economies will not be applied.

We believe that this will be a vital tool for strengthening developing countries. That is why Paraguay signed the constitution of the Bank of the South and will continue to support the strengthening of that institution so that it can meet its objectives of financing the balanced and stable economic and social development of its member States, promoting macroeconomic stability and strengthening integration in order to set the foundation for regional and financial autonomy. However, that does not mean that we no longer require the support, resources and cooperation of the most developed countries for the two modes of cooperation are complementary for development.

Paraguay believes that the international community should ensure that the mobilization of external resources becomes a priority for international financial bodies and the developed economies. To that end, we must regain the level of expansion of official development assistance, which in recent years has been shrinking in a disturbing fashion.

Terrorism must be eradicated from the face of the Earth. There is nothing more dangerous to the unity of civilization than terrorism as a fact of daily life: the terrorism that kills children through hunger; the terrorism of weapons anywhere; the terrorism that affects children in my country who die because of toxic produce; the terrorism that killed our brothers in the Twin Towers, which will continue to kill as long as war remains a business for a few and fanaticism continues to cloud our hearts.

I know that love is a word not frequently used in political discourse, but there is no other way to rebuild a world so disfigured by hate. We must not forget individuals who, for various physical and mental

reasons, have special capacities. Those are our dearest brothers and sisters in a world that often excludes those who cannot compete in terms of physical strength or thought. We must create conditions to enable them to share in our everyday lives without suffering the burden of exclusion or indifference. Our efforts to support that sector of the population need not be extraordinary but should be carried out in daily actions, rich in sharing and informed by an awareness of brotherhood and nature.

In this globalized world where things happen so quickly and communication is immediate, we see clearly its greatest technological advancements, its powerful financial architecture and its scientific plans to colonize the universe, but, we have to ask ourselves, where has the human being been left in all of this?

Men and women must always remain at the centre of that scenario. The only thing that will save us from post-modern savagery is if they recover their place from which no one should ever have been exiled. Humanity is the only value shared, without a single difference, by a child dying of hunger in a developing country and a child who eats breakfast every day in a developed country.

Paraguay is a small country in the world, but it believes in friendship. That is why we have set 30 July as the Day of Friendship. We hope that this initiative will resonate in various regions of the world and that friendship, with its values and its principles, sooner rather than later will replace the hostility which is so present in our times.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Paraguay for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Fernando Lugo Méndez, President of the Republic of Paraguay, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Aníbal António Cavaco Silva, President of the Portuguese Republic

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Portuguese Republic.

Mr. Aníbal António Cavaco Silva, President of the Portuguese Republic, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Aníbal António Cavaco Silva, President of the Portuguese Republic, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Cavaco Silva: (*spoke in Portuguese; interpretation provided by the delegation*): Mr. President, I wish you all success for your tenure in office.

Guaranteeing international peace and security as well as the sustainable development of our peoples is our shared responsibility. The way we carry it out will determine our common destiny. The centrality of the United Nations has never been so clear. The United Nations will be what we, as sovereign and equal Member States, want it to be.

We live in a time of historic acceleration, a time of great opportunities but also of challenges on a global scale. Global challenges imply a collective responsibility. The United Nations is the forum that best embodies that collective responsibility. That is also why I strongly support the statement made by the President of the French Republic, current President of the Council of the European Union.

In a globalized and interdependent world, only strong multilateral institutions can promote the fundamental values of peace, democracy, human rights and sustainable development. Portugal is committed to supporting effective multilateralism based on a cohesive and efficient United Nations.

Our words cannot be empty rhetoric. Therefore we must be consistent and put into practice the values and principles we defend. Our actions must be based on very clear assumptions. First, we must make every effort to ensure that the United Nations has the means necessary to fulfil its mission, and we must contribute to the achievement of the mandates with which we entrust it.

Secondly, we must ensure broader representation in the United Nations bodies and make their actions more transparent. Is it reasonable to continue having a Security Council without reforming its working methods, when countries such as Brazil and India have no permanent seat and when Africa is not permanently represented? We surely do not think so and are open to the possibility of broader solutions.

Thirdly, we must guarantee the fulfilment of the declarations on human rights approved by all of us. The Organization must bear in mind that the ultimate beneficiaries of its actions are not States as such, but the citizens and peoples that compose them.

Portugal has been committed to this common effort — first, by participating in peacekeeping operations. I would like to commend the many thousands of Portuguese who have participated in over 20 missions led by the United Nations and those who currently are taking part in missions in Afghanistan, the Central African Republic, Chad, Kosovo, Lebanon and Timor-Leste.

This year we celebrate the sixtieth anniversary of United Nations peacekeeping operations, and I would like to pay tribute to all of the Blue Helmets. In particular I pay tribute to the memory of all of those, including Portuguese nationals, who have made the ultimate sacrifice for the ideals of the United Nations Charter.

Africa must remain a priority. That belief led us, together with our African partners, to hold the Cairo and Lisbon summits between the European Union (EU) and Africa, which began to further the dialogue between the two continents. The shared principles, the commitments undertaken and the EU-Africa Joint Strategy illustrate a renewed partnership based on cooperation in areas such as peace and security, development, good governance and human rights, trade and regional integration. Peace, sustainable development, access to education and health care and the integration of African economies in the international markets are essential objectives in building a more just, peaceful and balanced international order. Accordingly, we must support the efforts of the African nations to achieve those objectives.

In that context, I would like to congratulate the Angolan people for the civic-minded manner in which they conducted their recent electoral process. The legislative elections had a profound bearing on the consolidation of democracy in Angola, with important regional political repercussions.

I also welcome the political agreement in Zimbabwe, which we hope will mark a new period of national reconciliation as well as political and economic development.

I wish also to congratulate Guinea-Bissau on the anniversary of its independence. Guinea-Bissau is one of the States Members of the Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries (CPLP), from which it has received strong political support. The CPLP has undertaken increasing responsibilities as an operational partner of the regional organizations to which its member States belong, such as the European Union and the African Union, and of global organizations such as the United Nations.

The recent Lisbon summit of the CPLP, at which Portugal took over the presidency of the Community, confirmed its members' determination to promote peace, democracy, human rights and development. It also led to the definition of a common strategy of international assertiveness based on our shared asset: the Portuguese language — the fifth most spoken language in the world, connecting nations and peoples in five continents. This assertiveness should lead to the increased use of Portuguese as an official or working language of international organizations.

Recently, Portugal also assumed the presidency of the Community of Democracies. Very soon, we will be presiding over the Ibero-American Summit — a genuine reference point for political cooperation based on shared cultures and values. We are honoured by those mandates, which we intend to exercise with determination and confidence.

Portugal believes that the natural vocation of the Alliance of Civilizations to bring together peoples, cultures and religions will be instrumental in establishing a world where dialogue prevails over conflict and where tolerance, respect for cultural diversity and individual identity, and mutual understanding overcome built-up tensions. We therefore resolutely support the Implementation Plan of the High Representative of the Secretary-General.

Seven years have passed since New York suffered one of the most infamous acts the world has witnessed in our time. Although much has been done since then, terrorism continues to be a threat. The implementation of the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy is fundamental to success in combating that common enemy. In that regard, it is crucial to respect human rights and fundamental freedoms, the promotion of which contributes to preventing terrorism.

Hunger and extreme poverty are other, more insidious but equally destructive common enemies.

Much has also been said in that connection, and some measures have been taken. However, much more is required. We reiterate our unwavering support for the Millennium Development Goals. Portugal, which is contributing to the limit of its capabilities, is directing most of its development aid to Africa, where the levels of poverty are most striking.

We are pleased to note the establishment of the High-level Task Force on the Global Food Crisis. Combating hunger and poverty requires a strengthened global partnership in which the United Nations and the Bretton Woods institutions have a central role to play.

Ensuring sustainable development requires that we confront the challenges posed by climate change together. Failure to act now will result in an irreversible legacy for future generations, as shown by the last progress report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. In that common effort, we must support those who are most vulnerable to the effects of climate change, such as small island developing States and least developed countries.

Oceans, seas, islands and coastal areas, which are vital for human life and economic prosperity, deserve our utmost attention. It is therefore important that we join efforts to ensure that negotiations are completed by December next year on a global and transparent agreement on a post-2012 climate regime.

Economic development is not an end in itself; it is a means towards the progress of humankind and the affirmation of human rights. Portugal has been the driving force behind the draft optional protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, which the Assembly will be called upon to adopt. It is our opinion that the draft protocol represents a landmark in the promotion of democracy that will enable us to properly celebrate the sixtieth anniversary of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Let us always bear in mind that the dignity of human beings is not negotiable.

I would now like to refer to the humanitarian situation of refugees. Portugal acknowledges the remarkable work carried out by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. We must continue our collective efforts. In that regard, my country has responded to the need by tripling its refugee quota.

We are the United Nations. Its destiny is in our hands. The success of the Organization is closely linked to its capacity for regeneration and increased democratization, representation and effectiveness. I therefore wish to commend the consensus in the General Assembly as regards the Security Council reform process, which should enable intergovernmental negotiations to begin shortly. Portugal is honoured to be directly associated with that outcome.

In 2000, Portugal submitted its candidacy for a non-permanent seat in the Security Council for the biennium 2011-2012. Our candidacy must be considered in the light of the principles and values of the United Nations that we have long defended and which are enshrined in the Portuguese Constitution. We stand for service to peace and stability, sustainable development and human rights. We also believe in the central role of the Organization in pursuing those goals. We stand for equal representation for those States that constitute the majority in this house because we believe that that is the best way to guarantee a sense of justice, which is essential if decisions are to be accepted by all.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Portuguese Republic for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Aníbal António Cavaco Silva, President of the Portuguese Republic, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. John Agyekum Kufuor, President of the Republic of Ghana

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Ghana.

Mr. John Agyekum Kufuor, President of the Republic of Ghana, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. John Agyekum Kufuor, President of the Republic of Ghana, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Kufuor: Let me take this opportunity to congratulate you, Mr. President, on your very inspiring statement yesterday (see A/63/PV.5). Its

vision and compassion should provide a framework for the deliberations of the General Assembly into the future.

I should also like to thank the Secretary-General for his unequivocal resolve to use his tenure to provide accountable leadership to this global institution. His call for increased support from all Members in restructuring and streamlining the Secretariat he leads to ensure more flexible, efficient and effective tackling of the many global challenges confronting humankind is timely and must be heeded.

The unmistakable fact of our time is that the world is in a state of flux with unmatched challenges aptly described yesterday by you, Mr. President, as a confluence of large-scale interrelated crises. That is befuddling all nations, strong and weak, rich and poor; but, as you and others have also observed, there are tremendous opportunities as well. Examples of the challenges that practically all previous speakers have alluded to include the phenomenon of climate change and its attendant snow-melts, tsunamis, floods and droughts; the difficult-to-explain turbulence in the crude oil market; the soaring prices of food; the upheavals in the world financial market; the massive trafficking in drugs and weapons; and the spate of harrowing acts of terrorism in many parts of the world. While some of those problems are natural, many of them are man-made.

On the other hand, the advent of information and communication technologies is effecting magical changes in awareness and making time, space and boundaries virtually irrelevant to human interactivity around the world. Discoveries in medicine are improving the quality of life and life expectancy. Fast transportation, dramatic feats in engineering and bioscience technologies with the promise of turning even deserts into productive land are unleashing unimaginable wealth among nations and individuals. Collectively, those opportunities are diffusing power around the world, to such an extent as to negate any idea of a few nations having hegemonic sway in human affairs.

Indeed, the era of the explosion of knowledge can be said to be fulfilling the biblical saying that humankind has been created in the image of God. Humankind is increasingly showing limitless creativity, which inspires a vision that it is indeed capable of overcoming the challenges of our time. However, the problem is one of whether we will curb our self-centredness, greed, bigotry and petty inhumanities to allow for the sharing of the outcomes of that creativity. Left to our individual nations, the peoples of the world will not be high-minded enough. The main challenge then becomes how the various peoples of the world will accept their common humanity as the centrepiece of their endeavours.

There must be leadership, for which the Organization seems to have been created. The founding fathers must have instinctively believed that, with time, the Organization would evolve into a global Government. For even as there were marked geopolitical considerations in the establishment of the United Nations, the Organization was also imbued with a powerful streak of morality. With time, the moral streak has been steadily overcoming the geopolitical dimension. That perception is what must drive the entire membership to accept the call for reform of this global institution and its agencies so as to make them accountable to Members and, in turn, make Members accept their authority and direction.

Indeed, the United Nations is the only Organization in the world with the potential to command respect across the board. Under its auspices, strong and rich nations alike are showing increasing tendencies to share knowledge and finance resources with the weak and poor. Fellow-feeling in international relations is also deepening. It is my belief that it is through the Organization that the world will eventually achieve peace, stability and prosperity, following the menacing flux that engulfs all of us now.

It is the same moral streak embedded in the United Nations that is propelling the development of the various regional blocs around the world. In the case of Africa, dramatic improvements have been made in the last decade and a half. The African Union's Peer Review Mechanism demonstrates the great resolve of African nations to adhere to the rule of law and good governance. It is noteworthy that, as of now, close to a majority of the membership of the Union has signed up for review. It is also significant that many more African leaders are today acceding to power through the ballot box.

Meanwhile, under the auspices of the New Partnership for Africa's Development, Africa is trying to pool resources among its members, in partnership with others outside the continent, to exploit its huge

potential and to develop its markets and its energy, telecommunication, transportation and agriculture sectors, among others. That is the way to solve the many problems of poverty, illiteracy, disease, ignorance and conflict. It is Africa's initiative to mainstream itself into globalization, and is receiving the support of the international community. Evidence of that includes the many joint conferences held with Japan, China, Brazil and India, as well as Africa's old allies in Europe and North America.

While we appreciate the support from our development partners, I must say that there is still room for improvement, especially as regards the continent's efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. The various existing forms of assistance are uncoordinated and insufficiently substantial to achieve the Goals by the target date of 2015. In that regard, the Secretary-General's call for review and quick delivery of support is timely. As observed in the Accra Accord of the twelfth United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, the whole idea of aid is to empower beneficiary countries to stand on their own feet and to become effective partners in the global market, from which neither rich nor poor countries can abstain, given the increasing interdependence of the world.

In January 2001, I was sworn into office as President of Ghana on a liberal democratic Constitution with the same strong streak of morality that I see in the Charter of the United Nations. The Constitution acknowledges the centrality of humankind in all endeavours; hence the provisions for respect for human rights, the rule of law, gender balance, accountability and transparency in governance.

But, in 2001 the national economy was in bad shape and Ghana had to sign up for the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Debt Initiative (HIPC) in order to access funds for various reconstruction projects for which credit lines were difficult to come by. With national determination and great discipline, the HIPC completion point was achieved in record time to earn debt forgiveness of about $8 billion from bilateral and multilateral creditors. That success has led to increased inflows of domestic and foreign investment that have enabled the Government to launch, among other social services, a free and compulsory universal basic education programme and substantial developments in both the second-cycle and tertiary levels education.

In the health sector, the first-ever national health insurance scheme, including free maternal care, has also begun in Ghana. Concurrently, heavy investments are being made in infrastructure in the transportation, energy and telecommunications sectors in anticipation of accelerated growth in the economy. Meanwhile, a process to modernize the country's agriculture through mechanization has begun to improve the welfare of the more than 60 per cent of society that is rural and depends on the sector for its livelihood.

By those policies, among others, the nation is now in sight of attaining its ambitious vision of middle income status by 2015, which is also the target date for the Millennium Development Goals. Those developments have been crowned by the discovery of oil in commercial quantities, which the Government is determined to make a blessing for the whole nation of Ghana, rather than a curse.

That is the Ghana story as my term of office comes to a close at the end of this year. The moral I glean from the story is that development in freedom is possible. In other words, accelerated national development and good governance, including respect for fundamental human rights, are not mutually exclusive. Indeed, good governance should hasten development.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Ghana for the statement he has just made.

Mr. John Agyekum Kufuor, President of the Republic of Ghana, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mrs. Michelle Bachelet Jeria, President of the Republic of Chile

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Chile.

Mrs. Michelle Bachelet Jeria, President of the Republic of Chile, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations Her Excellency Mrs. Michelle Bachelet Jeria, President of the Republic of Chile, and to invite her to address the Assembly.

President Bachelet Jeria (*spoke in Spanish*): Eight years ago, representatives of all the countries of the planet met in the General Assembly Hall to adopt the United Nations Millennium Declaration (resolution 55/2) — a text that is one of the broadest and most explicit agreements ever drafted by the international community on the subject of development, well-being and quality of life. The Declaration set a series of very precise standards in the fight against hunger and poverty, education, health, gender equality, environment and cooperation, stating for each the minimum to which nations should commit themselves.

The world at that time announced the civilizing mission to which it aspired and identified the inescapable challenges and unavoidable tasks for any Government and for the international community. It defined a real ethical vision for the leaders of the nations. The world has changed since then, however.

We have witnessed, sometimes tragically, the emergence or reappearance of various problems of global significance, such as climate change, terrorism or the food crisis. At the same time, the interdependence of economies and communications has become even greater over the past eight years, which has undoubtedly created many opportunities but also greater risks and inequities.

In that changing context, we have witnessed outstanding progress towards the Millennium Development Goals in many countries of the world, but we have also witnessed many regrettable setbacks. World events over the past year give us much food for thought that will allow us to act decisively. The optimism of the turn of the century, leading to talk of the "millennium of hope", seems to be dissipating. It is estimated that the increase in food prices alone has driven more than 100 million people into extreme poverty. In turn, financial instability today is afflicting many economies, threatening to generate a worldwide trend towards recession in which — as always — those most affected in the end will be the world's poorest.

That is why it is so crucial to review our Goals. We cannot remain indifferent to the deterioration of the basic well-being of millions and millions of citizens all over the world. Those of us who share the same concept of progress and have made freedom and social justice our watchwords must raise our voices.

The world has managed to secure the economic, technical and scientific resources that, for the first time in its history, can ensure the well-being of all mankind. We cannot squander that capacity. A better world is possible, but it requires determination to move forward, and the current international economic crisis shows that it is precisely such determination that has been lacking.

The greed and irresponsibility of a few, combined with the political negligence of others, has plunged the world into a situation of great uncertainty. What a paradox we are witnessing today! With the money used to bail out the international banking system, the scourge of hunger on the planet could easily have been eliminated. Thus, now is the time to reaffirm our resolve.

The international economic crisis is a blow to those who believe that nothing can be done, that nothing should be regulated or that inequality cannot be remedied. That is the major lesson to be learned from what has happened over the past year. None of the current problems facing mankind, and certainly none of the civilizing goals that we have set ourselves, can be tackled properly if the public does not have a clear option of collective action by States and civil society.

That is why today I appeal to all to work together to support emergency measures to address the food crisis and to redouble our efforts to ensure that the developing economic crisis does not prevent us from attaining the Millennium Development Goals. That is why I appeal for an urgent and genuine commitment to multilateralism. That is why we must undertake to continue supporting and reforming international institutions, particularly the United Nations, to make them more representative, more democratic and more responsive to the hopes of our peoples.

That is also why we must reach agreement at the Doha Round of the World Trade Organization. That is why we must achieve concrete results at the forthcoming Follow-up International Conference on Financing for Development. That is why we must also ensure the success of the 2009 Copenhagen Climate Change Conference and convert those negotiations into agreements that make a decisive contribution to development.

I appear before this General Assembly as the representative of a nation that has much to contribute.

Modestly and proudly, we announce to this Assembly that Chile is ahead of schedule towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals set for 2015. I emphasize that it is possible to eradicate poverty, that it is possible to emerge from underdevelopment and, even more importantly, that it is possible to do so in democracy and freedom.

My country almost tripled the size of its economy between 1990 and 2008, which are the years of democracy in Chile. Just as we have made the economy grow, we have also made social investment and equity grow. We have advanced strongly on all fronts: health, education, housing, quality of life, social cohesion and greater gender opportunities.

The numbers speak for themselves. At the end of the dictatorship, in 1989, 4 out of every 10 Chileans were living in poverty. That 40 per cent dropped to 13 per cent in 2006. Although there is much to do, whenever we achieve one goal we set ourselves a new horizon of challenges. Just as we have drastically reduced poverty, today we aim to guarantee universal access for all Chileans to a social welfare system that allows them to live their lives in tranquillity and removes the fear of disease, poverty or old age, thus increasing opportunities for all, so as to advance steadily in greater equality and dignity.

However, this morning I wish to highlight the reasons for those achievements. What underlies them is a clear political determination, shared by the majority. The country has freely chosen a path of economic growth, political democracy and social justice. All political sectors have converged on that path, with differences, of course, as in any democracy, but all are aware that those are the major goals of Chilean society, because behind the achievements there is also a sad learning process.

In the past, when the country became divided, when the country became polarized in two irreconcilable factions, there was much suffering and very great social setbacks. Democracy placed at the centre of public life, as a goal for a freer and more just society, has been one of the main lessons that we Chileans have learned and that largely explains the achievements of the last 18 years.

That same conviction led us recently to be very active in coming to the aid of a friendly democracy. One week ago, when there was a threat to disrupt the democratic institutional order in the Republic of Bolivia, we nations of South America came to the support of the legitimately elected authorities and offered our cooperation to help in the resumption of the domestic political dialogue, while condemning the rebellion and bloodshed. Within a few days, we succeeded in convening a meeting of the Presidents of the member countries of the Union of South American Nations in Santiago de Chile, in order to agree with the President of Bolivia on a process for talks and to find and support a peaceful solution to the conflict in that country.

From this rostrum, as the convener of that historic regional meeting, I wish to express appreciation for the willingness displayed by all those involved, because we thereby set an example of how multilateral commitment should be understood. It is a commitment forged in the diversity of political projects but based on shared values, such as democracy, peace and the defence of human rights. The La Moneda summit — as that meeting was called, after the Chilean presidential palace — will forever symbolize the moment at which the South American nations decided to strengthen their commitment to democracy, whenever it is threatened anywhere on the continent.

Yet what does that episode tell us? It tells us that the values of democracy, dialogue, human rights and peace are becoming stronger than ever in Latin America. It tells us that the region wants to leave behind the dark moments of its history. It tells us that democracy is established as a system of government. It tells us that violence has no place in politics. And it tells us that those values, in addition to being widely shared by the citizens, are becoming entrenched in multilateralism, in institutions and in international law.

Over these years, we have learned that national policies, although essential, are not enough, that there is no incompatibility between affirmation of one's own identity and integration, and that international agreements must be formulated to govern globalization and make democracy and the social rights of the citizens a universal requirement. Each country has the right and the duty to contribute to the creation of a world in which the great values of mankind prevail, regardless of the country's economic or demographic dimension, of its influence or its power, or of how close it is to or how far it is from the hubs where decisions that affect the lives of each and every one of the planet's inhabitants are taken.

From our position at the south of the world, Chile is cooperating. We have enthusiastically supported, and in some cases promoted, the most diverse initiatives in pursuit of the development of our peoples. A few days ago, in Santiago de Chile, together with the Prime Minister of Norway, we launched an important regional initiative for the attainment of Millennium Development Goals 4 and 5 in Latin America and the Caribbean. Under that initiative, Chile will cooperate in the assignment and training of troops in Bolivia, Ecuador and other countries of the region. However, when we say "troops", we are not talking about soldiers. It will be a force of nurses, midwives and doctors specialized in maternal and child health, who will travel through the fields and mountain ranges of our America, delivering babies, helping mothers, providing vaccinations and caring for sick children. Because despite the progress made in that regard in recent years, which has increased the percentage of attended births from 78 to 89 per cent, still 22,000 mothers die in Latin America each year simply because they received no professional care. Despite the improvement in child mortality, 400,000 Latin American children under five years of age are still dying each year — hence, the urgency of that initiative, which is the urgency of promoting democracy and the social development of our people.

In just over two months, the world will have a noble reason for celebration. It will be the sixtieth anniversary of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. What a great step forward for mankind. That transcendental charter of rights marked the beginning of the end of centuries and centuries of arbitrary action, death, torture and abuse of power. Certainly that charter did not represent an immediate solution, but it did mean the beginning of the largest and most effective social and political mobilization in favour of people's dignity.

Today, those who violate that charter sully their reputation with the international community. We have gone even further by creating an international architecture of protection and legal advancement, in which my region set a great precedent with the inter-American human rights protection system.

We hope that something similar will happen with the Millennium Declaration. We want it to become an ethical and political requirement for all the world's rulers. We want the citizens of every country to protest against famine, poverty and unsanitary conditions. We want discrimination against women to be reason for shame for all those who practise it. We want discrimination against native peoples to be eliminated from the face of the Earth. We want protection of the environment to be part of the vocabulary of every inhabitant of the planet and, definitely, of the priorities of every Government in the world. We want cooperation by those who have the most to be a political as well as a moral obligation. That is Chile's achievable desire, which we have come to present to this General Assembly.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Chile for the statement she has just made.

Mrs. Michelle Bachelet Jeria, President of the Republic of Chile, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Danilo Türk, President of the Republic of Slovenia

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Slovenia.

Mr. Danilo Türk, President of the Republic of Slovenia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Danilo Türk, President of the Republic of Slovenia, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Türk: We are starting this sixty-third session of the General Assembly under the wise and inspiring leadership of our President, Mr. Miguel d'Escoto Brockmann. We rely on your experience and your political acumen, Sir, and I wish you every success in your work. At the same time, I wish to express our sincere gratitude to your predecessor, Mr. Srgjan Kerim, President of the General Assembly at its sixty-second session, who guided the Assembly with great sensitivity and determination. I also wish to pay tribute to the Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, whose tireless efforts are guiding the United Nations at this turbulent time.

Indeed, we live in a turbulent world at a turbulent time. We need real answers to the accumulated global problems. The era of optimism generated by globalization has come to an end. The eruption of the financial crisis in recent weeks has removed the last shred of doubt about that. The world needs real answers to big questions.

If you asked me to identify the key policy requirement for the United Nations today with a single concept — and in one word — my answer would be this: we live at a time requiring transformation. Transformation should be the key idea of policymaking to guide United Nations action. The United Nations should look to policies with a transformational potential and capable of producing transformational effects in the not-too-distant future. Obviously, that ambitious and general proposition begs further questions. Is the United Nations capable of generating social, political and economic transformation? Does the United Nations of today know what is the main area for the necessary strategic transformation? What needs to be done, by way of transformation, in the most sensitive area of the United Nations mandate, in the area of the maintenance of international peace and security? Allow me to address those questions one by one.

First, is the United Nations capable of generating social and political transformation worldwide? The United Nations has demonstrated such an ability in various areas of its work in the past. United Nations action in the field of human rights offers an excellent example. Later this year we will celebrate the sixtieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and it does not take much effort to realize how much the change that has occurred in those 60 years owes to the transformational energy of human rights.

Consider this: at the time of the adoption of the Universal Declaration in 1948, the world had experienced one of its most traumatic moments. The Second World War was barely over, its aftershocks were still strongly felt, and much of the world was physically destroyed. Stalinist oppression was the dominant feature of the Soviet Union and of a large part of Europe. In Asia and Africa, large populations suffered under the yoke of colonialism. The system of apartheid was being introduced in South Africa. Yet, that was the time when the authors of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights outlined an optimistic vision of a just society and a better world. Human rights were the genuinely transformational idea of the time and that idea has guided social change and development ever since.

The world of today, while still far from ideal, is substantially better than the world of 1948. Human rights have triumphed in many parts of the world and are making steady progress in others. Many of the oppressive systems have ended in the dustbin of history. The remaining ones are likely to follow. Democracy has progressed globally and is today the way of life of more people than ever before.

Obviously, violations of human rights still persist, as reported by the United Nations experts and by non-governmental organizations. Some of the causes of violations, such as racial discrimination, are persistent and take place in new forms. New issues of human rights have also arisen. Concerns related to security and counter-terrorism seem to have contributed to a diminished care for human rights in some societies. The abhorrent practice of torture has gained a degree of acceptance, which should be a cause for serious concern for all those who take human rights seriously. Armed conflicts continue to produce atrocities and massive violations of human rights.

Those phenomena must be met with resolute counteraction. Human rights institutions need to be strengthened and supported. Human rights education deserves higher priority. The principle of the responsibility to protect must be given real meaning and real teeth through diplomatic and other action. The International Criminal Court has to be accepted and made effective as the key institution for punishing perpetrators of war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide. Violations of human rights have to be combated wherever they occur.

But in addition, there is an even more fundamental reality that affects the actual enjoyment of human rights by all. The Universal Declaration proclaimed, in its article 28, that everyone is entitled to a social and international order in which their human rights can be fully realized. The authors of the Declaration realistically envisaged the long-term nature of the effort for human rights. Guided by that spirit, the General Assembly adopted, in 1986, its Declaration on the Right to Development, a right which became recognized as universal at the World Conference on Human Rights held in Vienna in 1993. That was a significant and realistic recognition of the intrinsic link

between two fundamental human aspirations: the one for human freedom and the other for human development. In subsequent years, the United Nations also developed a comprehensive understanding of what development is and what it means in our era. That understanding was elaborated at a series of global conferences in the 1990s and summarized in the year 2000 in the form of the agreement on global development goals.

The vision exists and practical progress, while still uneven, is visible. The high-level meeting on Africa last Monday strengthened the existing global consensus about the immediate priorities for Africa, including more effective financing for development. The panel discussions on the Millennium Development Goals tomorrow will be an opportunity to discuss the key issues of today, in particular those emerging from the current food crisis. I also hope that the proposal of the Secretary-General for a summit to consider progress in the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals in 2010 will gain wide support.

Those and other discussions also help in answering my second question: does the United Nations know the strategic direction in which the transformational effort must be concentrated today? Yes, the Millennium Development Goals are part of the answer, but it is already clear that global development — now and in the foreseeable future — will vitally depend on the preservation of our natural environment and, in particular, on how we address the problems of energy and global warming. The battle for our common, global future will be won — or lost — on the environmental front, and that is where the main transformational effort has to take place. There is no time to lose.

Earlier this year, the European Union, under the presidency of my country, Slovenia, adopted a plan of activities to reduce the emission of greenhouse gases. Yesterday, President Sarkozy of France, the current President of the European Council, reiterated the European Union commitment to the success of the Bali road map and the Copenhagen conference to be held next year. In the meantime — and I wish to emphasize this — progress must be made at the conference in Poznan, Poland, and in the process leading to the Copenhagen conference and to the final global agreement.

But those efforts will succeed only if an adequate partnership is established among the key economic and political players. Partnership between the European Union, the United States, Japan, China, India and the Group of 77 countries is essential. The existing environmental challenges call for a transformational approach to the way the world consumes energy, the way it develops technology and the way it pursues development. Incremental change will not do. Global cooperation is essential. Obviously — and I would underline this — the responsibilities of the developed and the developing countries are not the same. They are differentiated. But the world as a whole has to move ahead and the United Nations has to get the direction right. Transformation is the order of the day.

My third question relates to the maintenance of international peace and security and the necessary transformation in that area. Allow me to state right at the outset that there is a serious need for transformation of the existing institutions in the field of international security.

The international security landscape today offers a mixed picture. After the end of the cold war, there were moments of high hopes and moments of deep disappointment. There were successes and failures, including the failure to prevent genocide. But we also have to point out that the overall number of armed conflicts has been declining for more than a decade now. That is an encouraging development indeed, and it is in no small measure due to the contribution of the United Nations, which has steadily increased its experience and its capacity in peacekeeping, post-conflict peacebuilding and, to some extent, preventive diplomacy. The role of the Secretary-General has been strengthened in all those areas.

The progress made so far has established a degree of confidence in the capacity of the international security structures and their key players to cooperate and, even more, to work in partnership for the maintenance of international peace and security. However, it appears that the confidence developed thus far is still fragile and that remnants of the cold war mentality are still in existence. Further efforts are therefore needed. Those efforts, in my opinion, involve two basic sets of tasks.

The first set of tasks relates to the development of partnerships to address the key security issues, in particular those in the Middle East, the Caucasus, the

Balkans and several regions of Africa. In all those areas, there has been a degree of success in establishing cooperation and partnership among the key regional and global players working for peace. Models of concerted diplomacy such as the one established to deal with the issues of North Korea can and should inspire preventive diplomacy and peacemaking in other parts of the world.

The second set of tasks is equally urgent. Immediate consideration has to be given to a transformation of the existing security structures. Reform of the Security Council is long overdue. Incremental improvements of its working methods, while welcome, are far from sufficient. The time is ripe for changes in the Council's structure. I believe that the membership of the Security Council should be expanded, and that that should be done in three directions. First, there should be six additional permanent members from every region of the world. Secondly, there should be an additional category of non-permanent members with a more frequent rotation, six in any particular composition of the Security Council, and they should be elected in accordance with a formula to be determined by the General Assembly and alternate every second two-year term. Thirdly, the remaining eight non-permanent members would be elected in accordance with the principle of equitable geographic distribution. This three-point idea means that the total size of the reformed Security Council would not exceed 25 members; it would be a 25-member Council. It would be a more representative Council and, I believe, a more effective one.

I offer those ideas on reform of the Security Council to you, Mr. President, to use in the coming efforts for Council reform. It is widely accepted that that work needs to progress towards a successful conclusion. Success in Council reform would represent a key contribution to the transformation of the international security architecture. Together with other major projects of the United Nations, it would constitute a significant contribution to the improvement of the world.

Allow me to conclude. Is all of this new? In a certain sense, yes, because some of the specific tasks and specific projects are new. But more deeply, the answer is that all of this has to do with continuity. The United Nations has, from its inception, represented the hope for and the promise of an improved world. Let us not betray that hope and let us live up to that promise. Let us work for transformation wherever necessary. Let us make this era the finest hour of the United Nations.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Slovenia for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Danilo Türk, President of the Republic of Slovenia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Leonel Fernández Reyna, President of the Dominican Republic

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Dominican Republic.

Mr. Leonel Fernández Reyna, President of the Dominican Republic, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Leonel Fernández Reyna, President of the Dominican Republic, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Fernández Reyna (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the Government and people of the Dominican Republic, I am pleased to extend our warmest congratulations to the President of the General Assembly, Father Miguel d'Escoto Brockmann of the sister Republic of Nicaragua, on his recent election. We also take this opportunity to greet our fellow Member States in this General Assembly.

Eight years ago, in this same place, representatives of 189 countries undertook a crucial commitment, possibly one of the most transcendental commitments that such a large number of nations ever made. They agreed on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). In the year 2000, it was believed — and this is still the case today — that the objectives established at that time would go down in the common history of humankind as the bravest ethical decision ever taken in the face of extreme poverty, the shame of generalized injustice and the heartbreaking tragedy of social inequity. It was an agenda of work and dedication that required a large dose of political will, actions laid out in conformity with the goals to be reached, a reorganization of budgetary priorities and a

greater flow of aid resources and support for development.

We did not undertake the Millennium Development Goals in vague terms. We did not couch the Millennium Declaration in abstract and grandiloquent concepts lacking in substance. Quite the contrary, we analysed with the greatest possible rigour the situation that we wanted to correct. We measured with mathematical precision its overwhelming scope and the magnitude of the political and financial effort that its reversal would require.

We committed to the MDGs with such supreme responsibility that we even set a date for their achievement: the year 2015. Now we are halfway to that date, and we face the disheartening situation of an international landscape full of obstacles to overcome if we are to conclude what we set out to do in the year 2000. We knew there would be difficulties. We recognized that we would have to overcome immense obstacles, and we had identified every type of major challenge that would await us in the quest to carry out our plans.

In the Dominican Republic, we have been able to achieve some progress towards the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. Since 1991, we have reduced by more than half the percentage of five-year-old children who are underweight for their age. We have also made progress in achieving our goals related to health development and have the spread of HIV/AIDS under control.

However, we now know that over and above the limited progress achieved, not just by the Dominican Republic but by developing countries on all continents, more than half a million women still die every year from complications of pregnancy and childbirth that could be treated and prevented. We now know that, unless an extraordinary effort is made from now on, instead of reaching the goal of reducing by half the proportion of children of low birth weight, their number will grow to over 30 million. We also know that in 2006, the number of deaths caused by AIDS rose to almost 3 million and that the preventive measures against that ominous pandemic remain grossly insufficient. Also disheartening is the fact that more than 600 million people will not have better health services than the ones they currently have access to.

Now, at the same time that this is occurring, the richest nations, which committed to providing extraordinary official development assistance in order to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, have in general fallen short in carrying out their pledges. Only five of those nations — Norway, Sweden, the Netherlands, Denmark and Luxembourg — have honoured their commitments, making contributions equal to and in some cases greater than the 0.7 per cent of their gross national income established as appropriate by this world Organization.

Nonetheless, we can be sure that, in order to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, we will now require a financial rescue plan from the international community — in a sort of bailout, as it is referred to nowadays. According to studies by the World Bank, a yearly average of approximately $50 billion in foreign aid would be needed to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. That is to say that achieving the goals of improving the quality of life and dignity in the living conditions of the poorest nations of the world would require an international economic financing plan as bold and as urgent as that currently being undertaken to save Freddie Mac, Fannie Mae, Bear Stearns, Merrill Lynch, AIG and other financial institutions. In other words, over the next seven years, until 2015, the date established for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, according to the criteria of the World Bank, we would need $350 billion of foreign aid. That represents half of the amount that is being debated at this very moment in the United States Congress to save from bankruptcy the financial businesses of Wall Street responsible for their own failures.

The people of the world affected by hunger and misery are crying out to the international community to lend the same urgent attention to the resolution of their plight that has been given to efforts to rescue banking institutions on the brink of collapse. We cannot entertain the idea that rescuing the dignity of the world's poor is less important or urgent as rescuing the institutions operating in the world's most important financial centre.

We would like it to be clear that we have not come here to condemn anyone. We have not come to point a finger at any friendly nation that is a Member of the United Nations family. Rather, we wish to sound the alarm and be a voice that troubles the conscience and calls for a solution to a problem that affects all

poor nations and is socially unjust and ethically unacceptable.

We would like to use this forum, however, to highlight other factors that hinder the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals and the progress of our nations. Such is the case, for example, of the unregulated speculation in the buying and selling of futures contracts for oil and food. There is no way to hide the fact that, without regulation, the futures markets are mechanisms that lend themselves through excessive speculation, fraud and manipulation to a distortion of the fundamental principles of economic activity. We do not question the fact that, with respect to the determination of oil prices, supply has not increased significantly while demand has increased; that there has been insufficient investment in new refineries in recent years; that there are geopolitical tensions in various parts of the world, or that the United States dollar has decreased in value. All of that is true.

What we do question, however, is the fact, that in just 12 months, the price of a barrel of oil rose from $70 to almost $150. In July, we were stupefied to see the price of a barrel of oil rise $10 in a single day. Just two days ago, while we were here in New York, we saw with great perplexity an increase of not just $10 but $25 per barrel in a single day. How can we explain that? Is it that suddenly, in just one day, the whole world increased its demand so abruptly, or did the world's oil wells unexpectedly disappear?

In reality, there is but one explanation: excessive speculation in the futures markets. It is incomprehensible that some can sell something they do not have while others can buy what they do not expect to receive. However, that is what has been happening recently, in the clearest example of so-called casino capitalism.

In just five years, hundreds of billions of dollars have entered the commodities futures markets, largely directed towards energy, while prices shot up by more than 200 per cent between July 2003 and July 2008. That has occurred not just with a few commodities, but with every single one of the 25 products on the world market index for commodities. In the past five years, the price of wheat has gone up by 177 per cent, soy by 196 per cent and corn by 214 per cent.

Nevertheless, we must reiterate here that what has the greatest impact on the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals is skyrocketing oil prices. In the Dominican Republic, our oil bill has risen from $1.667 billion in 2004 to a projected $6.5 billion this year. That represents a difference of almost 500 per cent. With that difference of $5 billion, the Dominican Republic could have financed every public investment laid out in the cost analyses of the Millennium Development Goals from 2008 to 2015.

The world does not aspire to be a gambling den. The world does not want continuous manipulation or permanent fraud in regard to factors that have a decisive effect on the quality of life. The world, in fact, has very simple aspirations: to live in conditions of social justice and equity, with the creation of opportunities so that every human being can develop his or her creative potential, both material and spiritual.

For the achievement of such noble objectives, the States that have committed themselves to realizing the MDGs as an agenda of true and genuine social transformation turn to the United Nations system with optimism and hope that it can correct and make up for existing distortions.

We trust that with so many intelligent persons meeting here, working towards a better life for all of humankind, important solutions will be brought to the table with the same speed, urgency and interest that are being shown in drawing up rescue plans for bankrupt banks during these turbulent times in the world of finance.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Dominican Republic for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Leonel Fernández Reina, President of the Dominican Republic, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Felipe Calderón Hinojosa, President of the United Mexican States

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the United Mexican States.

Mr. Felipe Calderón Hinojosa, President of the United Mexican States, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Felipe Calderón Hinojosa, President of the United Mexican States, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Calderón Hinojosa (*spoke in Spanish*): Allow me first of all to congratulate you, Mr. Miguel d'Escoto Brockmann, on your election to the presidency of this Assembly. It is truly an honour for Latin America to have you leading our work.

I have come to the United Nations to reaffirm Mexico's permanent commitment to strengthen our multilateral system and to build a world order that is more human, more just, more prosperous, cleaner and more secure.

The problems and challenges that are faced today by humankind demand a renewed and strengthened United Nations. Mexico is convinced that the United Nations is at a definitive historical moment. Global challenges of the twenty-first century are testing the leadership and the vitality of the Organization.

Threats to global security are not only the result of conflicts between States, but of the challenges posed by the activities of non-State actors such as international organized crime groups dealing in terrorism and drug trafficking. Those threats also include the degradation of the environment, pandemics, extreme poverty and massive violations of human rights.

I would like to start with a first challenge for our generation and our civilization. Few challenges are as urgent as reversing the effects of climate change. This phenomenon affects indiscriminately rich countries as well as poor, and paradoxically those that have contributed the least to it are often those that are the most vulnerable.

Climate change is not a problem to be faced by nations according to their degree of development. It is a task that requires moving from words to action substantiated in concrete proposals that are based on the principles of common, but differentiated responsibilities.

Mexico has accordingly proposed the establishment, within the United Nations of a Green Fund that will provide incentives for States to redouble their efforts in this area. It is a great satisfaction for us to see that organizations like the World Bank have already taken the initiative to broaden the availability of resources for the benefit of the countries that need them.

And so today, before this Assembly, I reaffirm on behalf of my country the proposal of Mexico to set up such a Green Fund to which each State can all contribute according to its economic capacity and that all of us could use in order to finance programmes to cut emissions, increase energy efficiency or establish measures for adapting to climate change.

I respectfully call upon all nations, especially the most developed, to contribute to the establishment of this Green Fund for the creation of financial instruments to protect the world's environment.

As the Mexican Nobel Prize winner Octavio Paz said:

> "Whatever the form of political and social organization adopted by nations, the most immediate and pressing issue is the survival of the natural environment. To defend nature is to defend humankind."

We have no time or margin of error to avoid our responsibility with regard to another global challenge that particularly affects the poor: the international rise of food prices. We must act decisively to prevent that situation from annulling the efforts we have made to overcome poverty.

In order to guarantee food security, the Government of Mexico has developed an action plan that aims to facilitate access to the supply of food and includes a sharp reduction of taxes on commodity imports, the enhancement of production, irrigation infrastructure and productivity in the countryside, the establishment of a national strategic reserve of commodities and an increase in direct and conditional financial grants to the 6 million poorest families in the country as compensation for the rise in food prices.

Indeed, many countries not only will be unable to meet the targets set at the 2000 World Summit, but have already experienced setbacks in the fight against poverty because of the phenomenon of high food prices. Despite that unfavourable environment, Mexico is achieving practically all of the Millennium Development Goals. In fact, we have set additional objectives that are reflected in our national development plan. To meet that challenge, Mexico has promoted a significant increase in its social spending,

including in education, health and human development. Next year, we shall allocate $125 billion, or 60 per cent of our budget, to social spending.

Let me cite some examples. A conditional direct transfer programme known as Opportunities, which enables families belonging to the most vulnerable groups of the population to send their children to school or to make regular visits to the doctor, has made it possible to reduce the country's rate of extreme poverty. Over the past 10 years, the number of persons living in extreme poverty has fallen from 38 million to fewer than 15 million. We have also achieved universal coverage in basic education. In addition, we have set a very clear goal of achieving, by 2011, every country's ideal in the area of health: universal coverage, including medical care, medicine and treatment, for all Mexican women and men.

We are living in an era of shared responsibility. Everyone knows that, in a globalized world, the consequences of our actions transcend the territories of our countries and affect the entire planet. The security threats faced by Mexico and Latin America are a good example of shared challenges; the illicit trade in drugs, weapons and human persons knows no borders. Today, Latin America is one of the regions with the highest numbers of violent deaths in the world, and that has become one of the major limitations to our development.

In Mexico, we are decisively addressing the delinquency and organized crime that threaten our society and our democratic institutions. Mexican families have decided to live in a Mexico of peace and laws — a Mexico in which neither impunity nor crime is tolerated. That is why we have begun to tackle crime head on. However, that requires shared international responsibility. Mexico reiterates its appeal to all nations to seek new forms of cooperation against those threats. The eradication of those scourges is a guiding principle of Mexico's national security policy and of the international agenda that we are promoting.

In addition to those problems, there is an increasing questioning of the principles and values defended by the United Nations — principles and values that were once believed to have taken root in the community of States. Some have called into question the fundamental principles of democracy and human rights, citing security requirements or the pre-eminence of economic and social rights. In commemorating the sixtieth anniversary of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Mexico calls on Member States to defend the universal values that are a precondition for human development and the rule of law.

Migratory flows are another global phenomenon of our time. In today's world, more than 200 million people live outside their countries of origin. The causes of international migration are complex, ranging from the consolidation of integration processes to the demand for labour, the lack of adequate economic conditions and the persistence of internal or inter-State conflicts. Included in that population are millions of Mexicans living here in the United States, who have sought opportunities for a dignified life for their families.

Migration cannot be reduced to the issue of security, nor can it be managed as merely an economic phenomenon. That is why Mexico believes that the international community must view it in a comprehensive manner that permits migratory flows to be legal, safe, orderly and respectful of human dignity. The United Nations must fully shoulder its responsibility in the light of that global phenomenon, guided by the principle of shared responsibility among the countries of origin, transit and destination.

Terrorism, regardless of its justifications or ideological motivations, has no place in the community of values that we have forged with such great difficulty. Mexico condemns it and reaffirms its readiness to cooperate on the basis of international law to prevent terrorist acts and punish their perpetrators.

The paradox is that all those problems can be dealt with and resolved only through global action, which requires the mediation of the United Nations.

We Mexicans do not wish to shirk our global responsibilities, nor will we do so. We want to be actors in — not observers of — the world's transformations. We have decided to strengthen our activism. Mexico has the eleventh largest population and the twelfth largest economy in the world, and we have a long tradition of contributing to peace and international law.

Therefore, we want to occupy a place of responsibility and commitment to the common good of nations. That is why Mexico has submitted its candidature for a non-permanent seat on the Security

Council for the period 2009-2010. If elected, my country will commit itself to acting on the basis of the fundamental values of the international community: the prevention and peaceful settlement of disputes; prohibition of the use or threat of use of force; and compliance with the principles of the Charter of the United Nations, international law and human rights.

We aspire to participate in the Security Council in order to promote Mexico's democratic ideals, which uphold the rule of law. We would strive to support the Council's efforts to rebuild societies and institutions torn apart by war and by emerging threats. We would work to ensure the settlement of disputes between States at the earliest possible stage before the International Court of Justice, as well as compliance with its decisions.

Our generation has a historic responsibility to act, here and now, to meet the challenges of humankind in the twenty-first century. It is our conviction that the United Nations is the forum that best represents the diversity of human beings, the plurality of nations and our civilization's collective aspirations to well-being and progress. It is a privileged alliance formed to ensure a world of peace and justice, security and development, with well-being and opportunities for all.

Multilateralism is the path of the twenty-first century. It is a comprehensive response to globalization. In the new global era, we also need a strengthened and renewed global Organization. We must join forces in order to make it possible for the United Nations to turn into reality the dream of its founders: peace, security and development for all the peoples of the planet.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the United Mexican States for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Felipe Calderón Hinojosa, President of the United Mexican States, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Abdoulaye Wade, President of the Republic of Senegal

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Senegal.

Mr. Abdoulaye Wade, President of the Republic of Senegal, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Abdoulaye Wade, President of the Republic of Senegal, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Wade (*spoke in French*): Mr. Miguel d'Escoto, in electing you to the presidency of the Assembly, Member States wished to show their confidence in your wealth of experience, as former Minister for Foreign Affairs, to successfully guide its work. The Senegalese delegation congratulates you through me. At the same time I wish to thank and congratulate our Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, who has taken many initiatives since he was elected as the leader of our Organization, as demonstrated by the recent meetings dealing with Africa.

Many heads of State have referred to the dizzying increase in the price of oil, including, just now, the President of the Dominican Republic. That is not by chance, because many of us have denounced the policy of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), which establishes the price of oil as it wishes and tries to blame it on the increase in demand — as if we had never studied economics.

The assessments of our association have not been very optimistic, but it should be noted that the objectives set by the founding Members have not been achieved. I quote from the birth certificate of our Organization that one of the purposes was "to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom". I believe that the United Nations has served humanity considerably by resolving some conflicts and by establishing lasting peace, but we must also recognize its shortcomings in many areas, including peace and in the economic field.

Today, populations throughout the world have great expectations of our meeting, because humanity, fortunately, still hopes, and that hope remains alive in the countries that are called poor, and indeed they are. But I usually say with regard to Africa that it is not poor, but rather that Africa is a continent that has been impoverished over five centuries of slavery and one century of colonization and exploitation. However, despite all of that, Africa has engaged itself in international cooperation — bilateral and multilateral.

We also strive to contribute within the United Nations, for example to peace, which is one of the objectives of our Organization.

Experience teaches us that there are limits to our international system. As you, Mr. President, and the Secretary-General have both mentioned, we should look directly at the issues and undertake reforms. Above all, we must demonstrate imagination and a capacity for innovation.

The first issue of concern to us is to feed Africa. We must substitute this idea of food aid, which was at the origin of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), and replace it with the concept of assistance to agriculture, because we have demonstrated that we are able to carry out agriculture just like developed countries. Unfortunately, we suffer from certain shortages, including seeds, fertilizer and equipment, as I will show in a moment. In place of traditional financing, we need to imagine what is referred to now as innovative financing.

In June 2008, we raised an alarm over the increase in the price of basic commodities and especially of food products. The Secretary-General asked FAO to meet in Rome with heads of State. We dropped everything in order to go to Rome and respond to that appeal, believing that real solutions would be proposed. Solutions were proposed, but we are still waiting for them to be implemented. At the same time, I drew attention to the fact that the countries of the Sahel region have three to four months of rain each year, during which time one could grow whatever one wanted if one had the means to do so. That is followed by eight or nine months of drought.

We launched that appeal, but like the doctor who arrives after the death, no one responded. Fortunately for Senegal, we foresaw difficulties due to the weighty global mechanisms and launched a programme called the Great Agricultural Offensive for Agriculture and Abundance. We were told it was too ambitious because it amounted to $800 million.

The project, which began at the end of May, will be completed in a month. I have the pleasure to inform the Assembly that, beyond meeting its food needs, Senegal has met the challenge of achieving a surplus. Six months ago, Senegal was among the most food-dependent countries, importing all its food, including more than 600,000 tons of rice annually. But a look at Senegal today reveals that there is green everywhere. I called on all Senegalese everywhere, including in the Senegalese diaspora, to farm as much as they wanted — on 10, 20 or 1,000 hectares — so long as it was food. That great offensive, as I have said, has unquestionably been a great success. The world will not see Senegal launching an appeal for food assistance. We have solved the problem and hope that we have solved it once and for all.

Admittedly, we could not have done it without God's help. The programme required $100 million, a third of which was to be devoted to fertilizer. Fortunately, our country is endowed with phosphate deposits that can be directly used as fertilizer for crops, thus enabling us to save one third of the cost of our investment in the programme. This has been possible because of the belief I have adhered to for more than 50 years. I have said for a long time that we could find phosphate. We have now gone out to find that hidden wealth. As I said in jest about the previous regimes, God had hidden it from them, but we managed to find it.

Africa has responded to the call to protect the environment. President Obasanjo and I launched the Great Green Wall Initiative, whereby a band of trees 15 kilometres wide and 7,000 kilometres long will stretch from Dakar to Djibouti. Once again, we were told that it was a dream. No, as I speak, since, in the words of the philosopher, we believe in going forward by walking, Senegal is in the process of building 587 kilometres of the Great Green Wall. Everyone has supported us in this endeavour — France, the United States, the European Union — at least in words. We are looking forward to your support, especially from the scientists, who we hope will help us to choose drought-resistant plants. It is possible. I contacted scientists through the Internet. They came from all over the world — Europe, the United States, American universities and Australia. I accordingly called for the help now of the Science Without Borders association. I invited scientists to Senegal because their knowledge comes free of charge, and they are always willing to make it available for the benefit of humankind.

The Great Green Wall will be backed by what we call retention basins. Billions of tons of water that fall during the rainy season are lost to runoff or the sea. We are trying to capture that water, as is being done so well in countries such as Burkina Faso. We in Senegal are making that a systematic effort. The World Bank

has labelled our effort conclusive, and we also want to build a green strip from Dakar to Djibouti.

Africa is therefore responding to the call of the international community to protect the environment. However, I cannot fail to point out that the African coast is in the process of disappearing, with several centimetres being lost from Morocco to the Gulf of Guinea each year. In that connection, a first meeting was held in Cotonou a few days ago to address the issue of coastal erosion.

As the Assembly is aware, the Secretary-General has issued a challenge to Africa. Not long ago, the World Bank indicated that five African countries were capable of achieving the Millennium Development Goals, including Senegal. The Secretary-General has said that no African country would achieve the Millennium Development Goals. I, for my part, respond to challenges. I shall meet that challenge for Senegal, I shall take it up, and that is not a dream. Not long ago, Senegal was very far down on the World Bank's Ease of Doing Business Index. Just a few days ago, thanks to our targeted efforts to overcome our shortcomings, Senegal was classified as the first country in Africa for doing business, and the fifth in the world.

Child and maternal mortality is one of the obstacles to overcoming our shortcomings. After giving thought to the problem, we decided a week ago in Senegal that, so long as the problem is left up to the State, we will not make progress. We have instituted a new approach that entails putting in charge a woman in each neighbourhood of the affected areas to monitor pregnancies and help pregnant women to visit doctors, as well as to immediately inform the authorities of any problems. We hope that will enable us to reduce child and maternal mortality. We are even going so far as to provide cell phones to women in the interior of Senegal so that they can report cases to health-care centres.

There is also a need to establish a new mechanism to mobilize resources. That was our goal in setting up a pilot group for solidarity levies to fund development. We have also launched a digital solidarity fund. We Africans have done that, with the support of the entire world. We are therefore on our way to bridging the digital divide identified by the Secretary-General.

As we begin our work here, more than 1 billion Muslims throughout the world are fasting in accordance with one of Islam's five pillars. Apart from religion, for every Muslim the fast is a code of behaviour inspired by the lofty values of peace, sharing, forgiveness, respect and brotherly love, irrespective of religion. On the basis of the letter and spirit of the message of Islam, which are being celebrated during this Holy month of Ramadan, and in my capacity as Chairman-in-Office of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, I should like here to reiterate the adherence of the Islamic Umma to the principles of the culture of peace and dialogue among civilizations. We affirm that we condemn extremism, violence, intolerance and discrimination, which are contrary to the teachings of Islam and which our religion condemns as a source of unhappiness and discord. It is for that reason that we are willing to engage in a dialogue with all civilizations.

The United Nations ideal of peace continues to be tested by the reality of conflicts in the world. Although we have certainly seen fewer trouble spots in Africa, conflict still rages in Chad, the Sudan and Darfur. We, for our part, will always continue to give our active support to peace and the United Nations.

Quite sincerely, however, I believe that there will be no solution in Darfur until we disarm all armed groups, which have been clearly identified. As for Zimbabwe, we welcome the progress that is being made. In Mauritania, we, as a neighbouring country, are very concerned about what is taking place. But I should like to reiterate here that we very much believe in the rule of law of the Republic, in accordance with the position outlined by the African Union.

We are also continuing our efforts in the Middle East, as we have been called on to give our support to intra-Palestinian dialogue and to dialogue between Israel and Palestine.

For many years now, I have consistently bemoaned the ineffectiveness of economic thinking. The failure from which we are suffering today is the failure of economists and financiers and, more generally, of the intelligentsia. I greatly appreciate the appeal just made to the intelligentsia made by the President of the Dominican Republic.

I continue to believe that the solution to the crisis is not to be found in the North; crises begin in the North, but we will not find their solutions in the North.

The global economy moved from Europe to the United States where it created a new centre of development that has underpinned the global economy for almost 200 years. Now that economy is running out of steam because of crises like the one we are facing today.

President Bush has told us about a solution advocated by his financiers, but I am sorry: the solution to the North's crisis lies in the South; the solution lies in Africa.

Rather than allowing capital to roam in every direction to create inflationary situations, I think it better, as a Keynesian thinker, to call on Members to invest in the creation of wealth and jobs in Africa, a continent possessed of great material and human resources and capable of taking its turn as the engine of the exhausted global economy. That economy, which left Europe for the United States, will finally be developed in Africa.

That is why we call on the entire world to invest in Africa because it is there that I sincerely believe that the last advances will be achieved. It is true that some trouble spots remain — as in every country — but with the support of the General Assembly and the Secretary-General, and with all people of goodwill, we are sure that Africa will be able to play that role, provided of course that Africans are trained as soon as possible to assume that historic mission.

It is on this note of hope and as Vice-President of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) and President-in-Office of the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) that I make an appeal to all countries to continue supporting efforts for peace and continue supporting investment efforts in Africa.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Senegal for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Abdoulaye Wade, President of the Republic of Senegal, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Mr. Pohamba (Namibia), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Address by Mr. Hâmid Karzai, President of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan.

Mr. Hâmid Karzai, President of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Hâmid Karzai, President of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Karzai: Since the last time we gathered here in this great Hall, we have passed a year of great hopes and grave fears. We have witnessed the hope-inspiring glory of human accomplishment at the Olympic Games in Beijing but shuddered at crumbling stock and housing markets around the world. We have a growing global understanding on climate change and the issues relevant to it, but seen millions of lives threatened by the shortage of food in many countries and witnessed with disbelief the brutal slaughter of innocent people at the hands of terrorists in Afghanistan, Pakistan, India, Algeria and several other parts of the world.

Since I spoke at this rostrum in the last session of the General Assembly, my country, Afghanistan, has grappled with a number of important challenges, none more troubling than the problem of international terrorism. Terrorist forces have significantly increased their attacks and brutality, and enjoyed freedom in their sanctuaries.

While Afghanistan has borne the brunt of terrorist violence, the scourge has now spread like a wildfire across the wider region. In Pakistan, where, until recently, extremist circles remained mainly focused on destabilizing Afghanistan, today terrorist violence is unfortunately also directed within Pakistani territory and against the Pakistani people.

Daily acts of intimidation and violence against communities in Afghanistan and Pakistan, in particular on both sides of the Durand Line, the killing of political and tribal leaders and the burning of schools are the upshots of the continued spawning and spread of terrorism and extremism in the region.

The callous attack on the Marriot hotel in Islamabad over the weekend, the bombing of the Indian Embassy in Kabul and the terrorist attacks in the Indian cities of Bangalore and Ahmedabad were the most disturbing demonstration of terrorists' growing reach.

Undoubtedly, terrorism will not go away until we dismantle the elaborate institutional support terrorists enjoy in the region and eliminate their secure sanctuaries. That will be possible only if we engage in sincere regional and international cooperation.

The democratic transition in Pakistan, heralded by the historic elections of last February, has been a most promising development in our region.

We in Afghanistan have warmly welcomed the inauguration of the civilian democratic Government. In particular, I take the opportunity to once again congratulate my brother, President Asif Ali Zardari, on his election as the President of Pakistan. I assure my brothers, President Zardari and Prime Minister Gillani, that Afghanistan stands ready to take several steps for each single step that Pakistan will take to address the challenge of radicalism and terrorism.

To the extent that terrorism in our region continues to be a global threat, evolving in nature and tactics, the struggle against it must continue unabated. In this context, I recall with appreciation this year's North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) Summit in Bucharest, where around 40 countries with existing military commitments in Afghanistan once again reiterated their strong resolve to stay the course.

Among the most significant outcomes of the summit was the emphasis on the Afghanization of the security sector as a measure to ensure sustainability and enhanced effectiveness. To that end, I call for a redoubling of efforts by the international community aimed at enabling the Afghan national security institutions, both the army and the police, to take on a greater share of the war against terrorism and for the protection of our people.

Above all, Afghanization of military operations is vital if the problem of civilian casualties is to be addressed effectively. The continuation of civilian casualties could seriously undermine the legitimacy of the fight against terrorism and the credibility of the Afghan people's partnership with the international community.

Whereas the military endeavour at the regional and international levels remains the primary response to the threat of terrorism, success will only be possible if the local population is empowered to confront it. Therefore, while terrorism and a persistent environment of insecurity are at work to subvert Afghanistan's growth, we must do what it takes to win the battle of Afghanistan's economic development.

Last June, my Government launched the Afghanistan National Development Strategy at the Afghanistan donors conference in Paris. If the pledges made at the conference are translated into timely commitments, I am confident that we will attain the development goals set out in our Strategy.

On behalf of the people of Afghanistan, I thank President Nicholas Sarkozy of France for his leadership in excellently organizing the Paris conference. I also thank the United States and all the other countries around the world that pledged generously towards the implementation of the Afghanistan National Development Strategy.

As in the security sector, Afghanization of the development process is the key not just to the goal of ensuring ownership but also to the effective implementation of our Development Strategy. Afghanization of the development process can be achieved through a meaningful commitment by our friends and donors to aid effectiveness. In that context, while urging a shift away from the use of parallel structures and wasteful mechanisms, I strongly endorse the role of the United Nations and the special representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Kai Eide, in coordinating the international community's participation in Afghanistan's development and State-building processes.

Thanks to the selfless sacrifices of men and women of Member States and the determination and sacrifices of our own people, the journey of Afghanistan's reconstruction is resolutely under way. Today our people are more educated, healthier, better off and more optimistic about their future. We have built thousands of new schools and reconstructed many more, where millions of our youngsters go to school and prepare for the responsibilities of tomorrow. Our rapid economic growth, with double-digit growth rates almost every year, has resulted in higher income and better living conditions for our people. Our rural development programmes have improved lives in

thousands of our villages that had never before seen an agent of the State among them.

We have also taken a number of legal and institutional measures to intensify our anti-corruption efforts, such as establishing the High Office of Oversight and Anti-Corruption, including special units in the Office of the Attorney-General and in the judiciary to oversee efforts aimed at eliminating corruption through preventive, educational and enforcement measures. We are committed to ensuring more concrete results in the coming years.

Also very important, on counter-narcotics, this year we have registered a 20 per cent decline in total opium production, while the number of poppy-free provinces has reached 18, making 50 per cent of the country virtually poppy-free. The key to sustaining our success will be ensuring alternative livelihoods for our farmers, investing to a greater extent in law enforcement and interdiction and, above all, addressing the far greater dimensions of the world's drug trade that lie outside Afghanistan, such as reduction of demand in foreign markets and stricter border controls.

Our efforts in counter-narcotics and in other areas have been complicated by the acute shortage of food within the country. In collaboration with the United Nations, we have launched a humanitarian appeal that we hope will receive a timely response from our partners in the international community.

The United Nations Charter promises freedom, justice, a dignified life, security and peace, and it is incumbent on all of us to work together to ensure that those promises are kept. Today, there are still too many corners of the world where conflict and tension are putting the lives and livelihoods of millions of people in jeopardy.

We deeply sympathize with our Palestinian brothers and sisters and their struggle and suffering. We urge a just and comprehensive settlement that fully realizes the rights of the Palestinian people, including their right to an independent State, living in peace, side by side with the State of Israel.

Today, once again, this Assembly session has brought us together at a time when our world is poised between great opportunities and menacing challenges. I am confident that we will make use of our growing collective ability as a community of nations to do what is right for the betterment of our world.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Hamid Karzai, President of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Blaise Compaore, President of Burkina Faso

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of Burkina Faso.

Mr. Blaise Compaore, President of Burkina Faso, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Blaise Compaore, President of Burkina Faso, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Compaore (*spoke in French*): I would like to warmly congratulate Mr. d'Escoto Brockmann, on his election to preside over our debates and to assure him of the full support of Burkina Faso. I would also like to express to his predecessor, Mr. Kerim, all my appreciation for the skill with which he guided the work of the sixty-second session.

It is also my pleasure to pay well-deserved tribute to the Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, who is investing his efforts with foresight and dedication to ensure the success of the reform of our Organization in order to build a safer world and to ensure continuing progress. I would like to reiterate in particular our warm thanks to him for the visit he made to our country last April.

This session of the General Assembly is taking place at the midpoint in the timetable for attaining the Millennium Development Goals and in an international context marked by threats to global peace. The food and energy crises have been joined by a financial crisis of exceptional seriousness. This session is therefore crucial and provides us with a great opportunity to assess the measures that have been taken and to take the necessary corrective measures.

In that respect, I welcome the initiative to organize a high-level meeting on the midterm review of the Millennium Development Goals. The

conclusions of that meeting, I firmly believe, will help us to establish appropriate strategies to speed up the achievement of the Goals.

The current food crisis throughout the world has amply demonstrated the ineffectiveness of our agricultural policies and the fragility of our production and trading systems. It is urgent to improve how international institutions function, to relaunch investment in agriculture and to support farmers' and professional organizations in innovative partnerships. To that end, it is important that we commit ourselves to major investment in farming, improved organization for producers, greater control of water resources, more effective distribution of seeds and fertilizers, and simpler access to land.

The energy crisis helps us to prioritize our search for lasting solutions in favour of renewable resources — solar, nuclear, wind and bioenergy resources — because of the impact of energy-related factors on States' development strategies.

Official development assistance has decreased in recent years in terms of the level of funding and its effectiveness. Beyond the central and recurring question of the level of official development assistance, there are four other dimensions that I believe are crucial. Those dimensions are, first, ownership of economic policies and support for capacity-building in governance in our States; secondly, harmonizing and simplifying donor procedures; thirdly, the gradual alignment of assistance with national development priorities and programmes; and fourthly, improved coordination between our technical and financial partners on the ground, under the leadership of Governments.

Those are the main requirements with regard to ensuring more effective public aid. I take this opportunity to express my thanks to all our development partners who have always supported us as we strive for encouraging results.

The scourge of drugs and narcotics is a threat to Africa in general and the West African subregion in particular. Used as departure and transit points for exporting illegal drugs, some parts of our countries are experiencing a genuine cross-border crime wave. The rapid eradication of that scourge requires the solidarity and active support of the international community.

With regard to environmental issues, the international community must invest more if it is to bring appropriate responses to the climate change affecting our planet. Scientific and political ideas must be aimed today at protecting and preserving a fully functioning ecosystem for future generations.

Resolving conflicts throughout the world, and particularly on the African continent, represents a major challenge for the community of nations. Burkina Faso, which currently holds the presidency of the Economic Community of West African States and the West African Economic and Monetary Union is making its contribution to enhancing peace and security, which are indispensable to ensuring progress and democracy. In Africa, centres of tension remain, but we can welcome the remarkable progress achieved by numerous mediation efforts in various regions, which have demonstrated the capacity of Africans to resolve their disputes for themselves.

In Darfur, the Security Council's decision has allowed the deployment of the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation. Burkina Faso, which is taking part in that peacekeeping operation, welcomes the appointment of Mr. Djibril Yipené Bassolé as the Joint African Union-United Nations Chief Mediator for Darfur. Given the complexity of his mission, I call on the international community to give him its full support and to ensure a rapid resumption of the political dialogue and to strengthen the operational capacities of the hybrid force.

We are also concerned by the erosion of the Somali State and its post-electoral crises. With regard to Western Sahara, we are encouraged by the efforts made by the parties to the conflict, particularly the Kingdom of Morocco, and by the Security Council's call for a realistic settlement.

The Sahelo-Saharan region has been affected by persistent insecurity for many years. Collective efforts at dialogue and cooperation are required to restore peace and security there. In that regard, we welcome and support the Algiers accord reached recently between the Government of Mali and the Tuareg rebels.

Burkina Faso also welcomes the progress made in the Middle East. The strengthening of Lebanese sovereignty, the creation of a viable Palestinian State and security guarantees for Israel will contribute to establishing lasting peace in that region.

With regard to the Iranian nuclear issue, I hope that reason will prevail and that negotiations will reconcile Iran's rights to civil nuclear power and the legitimate fears of the international community with regard to military nuclear proliferation.

In Afghanistan and Iraq, the situation continues to be tragic and to claim new victims every day, most of whom are innocent civilians. Burkina Faso will continue to invest with the entire international community in re-establishing peace in those countries.

The news today is dominated by the conflict taking place in the Caucasus. While reasserting its support for negotiations by the European Union, Burkina Faso hopes that the solution to the crisis will be based on inclusive dialogue and respect for international legality.

I note with pleasure an improvement in relations between the Republic of China or Taiwan and the People's Republic of China. I deeply hope that this new spirit will open the way to Taiwan's participation in the activities of international organizations.

For many years now, the United Nations has been committed to a process of reforms that should lead to the improved effectiveness of its activities in the face of the demands of the modern world. Despite the progress that has been made, much remains to be done. Our resolve to reach that goal must remain constant.

Burkina Faso has deep faith in multilateralism and solidarity among peoples. We reassert our willingness to make our contribution wherever it is requested to maintain and consolidate peace, development and democracy.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of Burkina Faso for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Blaise Compaore, President of Burkina Faso, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Shimon Peres, President of the State of Israel

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the State of Israel.

Mr. Shimon Peres, President of the State of Israel, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Shimon Peres, President of the State of Israel, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Peres: Over 60 years have passed since the General Assembly voted on the historic resolution that would have put an end to the Arab-Israeli conflict. Resolution 181 (II) called for the establishment of a Jewish State and an Arab State. Its title was: "Plan of Partition with Economic Union". It envisioned two States for two peoples, fulfilling a distinct national aspiration. The Jewish people adopted the resolution and established the State of Israel. The Arabs rejected it, and this led to war.

What happened in the ensuing years is much different from the resolution's original intent. While much has changed since then, the ironies of history summon similar circumstances today. Today, again, we are in the middle of the lake. There is no sense going back. Continuing forward will show how near we are to achieving the initial goal.

A year prior to Israel's declaration of statehood, its first Prime Minister, David Ben-Gurion, called me, a young man from a kibbutz, to serve in our national defence. Since then, I have participated in Israel's dynamic realities: the building of security; the striving for peace. So, I need no books to learn the history, since I witnessed its miraculous unfolding. We went through seven wars. All have paid heavily. Tears still flow down the faces of bereaved mothers. Remembrance days fill the air with silent prayers of widowed families who lost young boys and girls in battle. They are, today, the same age, but lifeless.

Israel turned military victories into peace processes, knowing that the cost of life renders imperfect peace superior to perfect victories.

We have also achieved two peace agreements: the first, with the largest Arab country, Egypt; the second, with the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. All the land, all the water, all the natural resources that fell into our hands through war were completely repatriated after peace was signed.

But for peace, the call in our region is to repair the damaged environment and the wounded land which leads to poverty. If we do not overcome the desert, the thirst, the pollution, they will overcome us. Joint

ventures can meet this call. Nature does not carry a national passport.

With the Palestinians, we negotiate full peace. Both parties agreed to building a Palestinian State side by side with Israel, living in peace, security and respect. We tried to conclude those negotiations this year. Apparently, this will take a longer time. I believe it can be accomplished, in spite of this, within the next year.

I know that our Prime Minister is more than ready to conclude an agreement. And knowing President Abbas as well, I am sure he will not miss this opportunity. We agreed to progress in spite of possible changes that may take place in the leadership. Gaps have been narrowed through negotiations, particularly, and hopefully, the territorial ones.

But peace is not just a matter of territorial compromise. Rogue politics rejects peace even when and where territorial disputes have been resolved. In Lebanon, we implemented the resolutions of the United Nations, but Hizbullah paralysed the country and cut the road to peace.

From Gaza, we withdrew completely and dismantled all of our settlements. I know there are a great many complaints about the settlements: in Gaza, we dismantled 30 settlements by order of the Government; Hamas responded with a bloody takeover and turned the Strip into a base for rocket fire.

These militants offer no positive alternative but the agonies of Job. They added kidnapping to bombings, bringing strife to innocent families. From this rostrum, I call for the immediate release of Gilad Shalit, the son of Aviva and Noam, a most peace-loving family. This Assembly should place the release of that person at the top of its priorities. Holding a hostage in Gaza, causes Gaza's isolation and could cause further deterioration.

At the centre of this violence and fanaticism stands Iran. It presents a danger to the entire world. Its quest for religious hegemony and regional dominance divides the Middle East and holds back chances for peace, including among Arabs, while undermining human rights.

Iranian support for Hizbullah divides Lebanon. Its support for Hamas splits the Palestinians; it postpones the establishment of the Palestinian State. Yesterday, from this very rostrum, the Iranian leader renewed the darkest anti-Semitic libel — the "Protocols of the Elders of Zion" — bringing to life one of the ugliest plots against the Jewish people. Their despicable denial of the Holocaust is a mockery of indisputable evidence and a cynical offence against the survivors of the Holocaust, contrary to the resolutions adopted by this very Assembly.

Iran continues to develop enriched uranium and long-range missiles. It has introduced a religion of fear, opposing the call of the Lord to respect human life: all humans; all life. The Iranian people are not our enemies. Their fanatical leadership is their problem and the world's woe. Their leader is a danger to his own people, to the region and to the world. He is a disgrace to the ancient Iranian people and tradition. He is a disgrace to the values of Islam and all religions. He is a disgrace to this House, the United Nations, and its basic principles and values. His appearance here is a shame.

The Jewish people have known throughout history that they must stand firm and face evil. Enlightened humanity should make it possible for freedom and respect to prevail for all of us.

Tehran combines long-range missiles with short-range minds. It is pregnant with tragedies. The General Assembly and the Security Council bear the responsibility to prevent agonies before they take place.

Israel has shown that democracies can defend themselves. We are able to defend ourselves. We do not intend to change that capacity to defend ourselves.

Terrorism has not solved a single problem. It never has; it never will. It will make the world ungovernable. If groups of killers are allowed to threaten innocent masses, the world — if it continues to survive — will be without order and security, a hopeless battleground. The free world must unite to stop this, to combat it.

Israel, for its part, shall continue to seek peace sincerely and fully. We suggest immediate peace with Lebanon. Israeli Prime Ministers have indicated to Syria that, for peace, we are ready to explore a comprehensive compromise. To gain trust and save time, we have suggested a face-to-face meeting with President Assad. I say to the President: "Follow the successful example set by President Sadat and King Hussein". We await an answer.

I know there is a growing concern that peace is far away. My lifelong experience provides me with a different judgement. True, I have seen stagnation, regression and failure in our journey, but today I can identify a road leading in the right direction. In addition to the peace agreements, a series of summits have taken place: Madrid, Oslo, Wye, Camp David, Sharm el-Sheik, Annapolis. In fact, Israelis and Arabs are marching towards peace. After a long internal debate, Israel has chosen to support the two-State solution.

Furthermore, I must say that in Beirut, the Arab League replaced the three "nays" of Khartoum — which were no peace, no negotiation, no recognition — with an initiative inaugurated by King Abdullah Bin Abdulaziz Al Saud. I call upon the King to further his initiative. It may become an invitation for comprehensive peace — one to transform a battleground into a common ground.

I respectfully invite all leaders to come to discuss peace in Jerusalem — which is holy to all of us — where all of us are praying to the same Lord as offspring of the same Father. Israel shall gladly accept an Arab invitation to designate a venue where a meaningful dialogue may take place at their choice.

We are facing a serious economic crisis in the world. Perhaps it has happened because we are rich and light with funds and poor and heavy with ideas, while we live in an era in which science, not land, is the basis for a successful economy. Science does not stop at borders; it is not disturbed by distances. Wisdom cannot be conquered by armies. Knowledge diminishes discrimination because it operates through goodwill and transcends race, nationality, colour and gender.

The global dangers unite and divide us at the same time. The dangers are clear: degradation of the environment, shortage of water, lack of renewable energy, the spread of terrorism and, alas, increased poverty among millions and millions of people. The divisions of the free world may increase them. Unity may offer alternatives. It would direct global investments to new areas and to demanding challenges such as health, security, education and the environment.

The future is not in the hands of oil or gold. Intellectual assets, new inventions and superior education hold the key to the future of each of us. In our region, border areas could become open economic zones, permitting the free movement of people, commodities and ideas. They could encourage tourism and build high-tech incubators. They could cultivate and advance modern agriculture. Economic zones would provide a million jobs and produce billions of cubic metres of desalinated water for the Arabs, for the Palestinians, for the Jordanians, for Israel — for all of us. We have already started to do this; the initial steps are promising.

The Jewish people are celebrating a New Year. I would like to end with a quote by Rabbi Nachman of Breslav:

> "May it be thy will to remove war and bloodshed from the world and perpetuate the wonders and greatness of peace. All the inhabitants of the world shall recognize and know the truth: that we have not been placed on this earth to wage war and not for hatred or bloodshed."

I will repeat it in Hebrew.

(The speaker repeated the quote in Hebrew)

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the State of Israel for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Shimon Peres, President of the State of Israel, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

The President returned to the Chair.

Agenda item 8 (*continued*)

General debate

Address by Mr. Wen Jiabao, Premier of the State Council of the People's Republic of China

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the Premier of the State Council of the People's Republic of China.

Mr. Wen Jiabao, Premier of the State Council of the People's Republic of China was escorted to the rostrum.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Wen Jiabao, Premier of the State Council of the People's Republic of China, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Wen Jiabao (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): For China, this has been a special year. We experienced

two major events. One was the devastating earthquake in Wenchuan, which caused grave loss of life and property. In the face of the disaster, the Chinese people showed great strength, courage, solidarity and resilience. By now, the people affected by the earthquake have been properly relocated and recovery and reconstruction work is well under way. The other event was the successful hosting of the Beijing Olympic Games. That grand sporting event provided a good opportunity for athletes from around the world to show true sportsmanship. It also enabled the world to learn more about China and for China to learn more about the world.

In our fight against the earthquake disaster and our efforts to host the Games, we received understanding, support and assistance from the international community. I wish to take this opportunity to express sincere gratitude on behalf of the Chinese Government and people.

Now the whole world wants to know in what direction China is heading, both politically and economically, after the Beijing Olympic Games. Let me tell you in unequivocal terms that China will remain committed to the path of peaceful development, unswervingly pursue reform and opening-up, and continue to adhere to an independent foreign policy of peace. This is in the fundamental interests of the Chinese people and the people of all other countries. It is also in keeping with the trend of the world.

The Olympic Games that just concluded were held in China, the largest developing country in the world. The international community has highly commended the efforts made by the Chinese Government and people for the Games, and their success has greatly inspired the Chinese people and given them even more confidence and strength to achieve modernization of the country.

At the same time, however, we are soberly aware that China is a country with 1.3 billion people. Although its total GDP is one of the highest in the world, it trails behind more than 100 countries in terms of per capita income. Development between urban and rural areas and among different regions in China is unbalanced. The rural areas, particularly in western China, are underdeveloped. Tens of millions of Chinese lack adequate food and clothing.

China is still a developing country, where productivity remains low and further development is constrained by the shortage of resources and energy and by environmental consequences. Our socialist market economic system, democracy and the rule of law need to be further improved, and certain outstanding social issues are yet to be resolved. To achieve China's modernization is a daunting task, and we still have a long way to go. Both the opportunities and challenges that we face are unprecedented. We will seize the opportunities, rise up to challenges, dedicate ourselves to nation-building and focus on development. That is what the Chinese Government and people have been thinking and doing.

People may ask how China is achieving its development. The answer is through reform and opening up. This year marks the thirtieth anniversary of China's reform and opening-up policy, a policy that fundamentally changed the closed, backward and ossified situation that had existed in China for years. It is a policy that freed people's minds and aroused their initiative, liberated the productive forces, generated great economic and social progress and instilled vigour and vitality into the country. Without that policy, there would not have been such change in China in the last 30 years.

To achieve the goal of modernization and build a strong, prosperous, democratic, culturally advanced and harmonious country, we will pursue the reform and opening-up policy. It is of vital importance to the development of China today. It is also a strategy that will shape China's future. We are firm in carrying this policy forward.

The Chinese nation has all along cherished the fine tradition and benefited from the wisdom of being open to new ideas and drawing on the strengths of others. The Chinese people have learned from 30 years of reform and opening up that only continued economic and political restructuring and reform in other fields can lead to sustained economic growth and social progress. And only continued opening up in an all-round way can lead the country to greater national strength and prosperity. This is the conclusion we have drawn both from our practice and exploration and from historical experiences.

The world needs peace, for only with peace can there be development. China earnestly hopes to have a peaceful international environment in order to achieve its development goals. The Chinese Government is committed to an independent foreign policy of peace

and stands ready to work with other countries to advance the noble cause of the peace and progress of mankind.

Respect for sovereignty and non-interference in the internal affairs of other countries is the prerequisite for sound State-to-State relations. The Chinese people have learned from their modern history of humiliation that when a country loses its sovereignty, its people lose dignity and status. China is firm in upholding its hard-won sovereignty and territorial integrity and will never tolerate any external interference. Following the principle of treating each other as equals, China also respects the sovereignty and territorial integrity of other countries, as well as the independent choices of their people for their own social systems and development paths.

China is ready to develop friendly relations with all countries on the basis of equality and mutual benefit rather than on ideology or on a political system. In handling international affairs, we make our own judgement on the merit of each case and take our position in light of our national interests and the well-being of the world's people. We will neither blindly follow the position of others nor give way to the pressure of any forces. In international relations, China does not seek to build alliances or become a leader and will never do so in the future.

Peaceful settlement of international disputes is a founding purpose of the United Nations and a basic principle of international law. China is committed to addressing historical issues and current differences with other countries through dialogue and negotiation. As a permanent member of the Security Council, China will continue to play an active and constructive role in promoting the peaceful settlement of international hotspot issues and regional conflicts.

China's development is peaceful in nature. It will not harm anyone or pose a threat to anyone. China does not seek hegemony now, nor will it do so in the future. China keeps and develops an appropriate level of military capability solely for the purpose of safeguarding China's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

The confidence and pride of the Chinese nation today are based on China's economic development, social justice, the civility of its people and moral strength. China will, through its own development, contribute to the peace and development of the world.

In the long history of humankind, the destinies of countries have never been so closely linked as they are today. Given the global nature of issues threatening the survival and development of mankind, such as global warming, environmental degradation, resource constraints, frequent outbreaks of diseases and natural disasters and the spread of terrorism, and in the face of the intertwining challenges related to finance, energy and food, no country can expect to avoid difficulties or to handle the problems alone.

Ongoing financial volatility, in particular, has affected many countries, and its impact is likely to become more serious. To tackle the challenge, we must all make concerted efforts. So long as people of all countries, including their leaders, can do away with hostility, exclusion and prejudice, treat each other with sincerity and an open mind and forge ahead hand in hand, humankind will overcome all difficulties and embrace a brighter and better future.

China, as a responsible major developing country, is ready to work with other members of the international community to strengthen cooperation, share opportunities, meet challenges and contribute to the harmonious and sustainable development of the world.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Premier of the State Council of the People's Republic of China for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Wen Jiabao, Premier of the State Council of the People's Republic of China, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. José Ramón Machado Ventura, First Vice-President of the Republic of Cuba

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the First Vice-President of the Council of State and Ministers of the Republic of Cuba.

Mr. José Ramón Machado Ventura, First Vice-President of the Council of State and Ministers of the Republic of Cuba, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. José Ramón Machado Ventura, First Vice-President of the Council

of State and Ministers of the Republic of Cuba, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Machado Ventura (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): Mr. President, on behalf of Cuba, I would like to congratulate you on your election as President of the General Assembly.

We are living at a decisive moment in the history of humankind. The threats looming over the world put the very existence of the human species at risk.

The promotion of peace, solidarity, social justice and sustainable development is the only way to ensure the future. The prevailing world order, unjust and unsustainable, must be replaced by a new system that is truly democratic and equitable, based on respect for international law and on the principles of solidarity and justice, putting an end to the inequalities and exclusion to which the great majorities of the population of our planet have been condemned.

There are no alternatives. Those responsible for this state of affairs — the industrialized countries, and in particular the lone super-Power — must shoulder their responsibilities. Fabulous fortunes cannot continue to be wasted while millions of human beings are starving or dying of curable diseases. It is not possible to continue to pollute the air and poison the oceans, which is destroying the living conditions for future generations. Neither the peoples nor the planet itself will permit that without great social upheavals and extremely grave natural disasters.

Wars of conquest, aggression against and the illegal occupation of countries, military intervention and the bombing of innocent civilians, the unbridled arms race, the pillaging and usurpation of the natural resources of the Third World and the imperial offensive to crush the resistance of peoples who are defending their rights constitute the greatest and most serious threats to international peace and security.

Concepts such as the limitation of sovereignty, pre-emptive war and regime change are expressions of the desire to mutilate the independence of our countries. The so-called war on terrorism and the alleged promotion of freedoms serve as pretexts for aggression, military occupation, torture, arbitrary detention, the denial of the right of peoples to self-determination, unjust blockades, unilaterally imposed sanctions and the imposition of political, economic and social models that facilitate imperial domination with flagrant disdain for history, cultures and the sovereign will of peoples.

The gap between the rich and the poor widens daily. The very modest Millennium Development Goals are an unattainable dream for the vast majority. While $1 trillion is spent on weapons worldwide, more than 850 million human beings are starving, 1.1 billion have no access to drinking water, 2.6 billion lack sewage services and more than 800 million are illiterate. More than 640 million children lack adequate housing, 115 million do not attend primary school and 10 million die before reaching the age of 5, in most cases as the result of diseases that can be cured.

With increasing frequency, the populations of the South are suffering from natural disasters, whose consequences have been worsened by climate change. Haiti, Jamaica, Cuba and other countries of the Caribbean are examples. We issue a special call for solidarity with the brotherly people of Haiti in their tragic situation.

The rise in oil prices is the result of irrational consumption, heavy speculative activity and imperial military adventures. The desperate search for new sources of energy has propelled the criminal strategy driven by the Government of the United States to transform grains and cereals into fuel.

For many of the countries of the Non-Aligned Movement, the situation is becoming unsustainable. Our nations have suffered and will have to continue to suffer the consequences of the irrationality, wastefulness and speculation of a few countries in the industrialized North, which are responsible for the world food crisis. They imposed trade liberalization and financial prescriptions of structural adjustment on the developing countries. They caused the ruin of many small producers; they denied — and in some cases destroyed — nascent agricultural development in the countries of the South, turning them into net importers of food.

It is they who continue scandalous agricultural subsidies while imposing their rules on international trade. They set prices, monopolize technologies, impose unjust certifications and manipulate distribution channels, financing sources and trade. They control transport, scientific research, gene pools and the production of fertilizers and pesticides.

We have not come here to complain. We have come, on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, to support and defend the demands of billions of human beings who are calling for justice and respect for their rights. The formula is not difficult; nor does it require great sacrifices. All that is needed is the necessary political will, less selfishness and the objective understanding that, if we do not act today, the consequences could be apocalyptic and would also affect the rich and powerful. That is why Cuba, on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, calls once again on the Governments of developed countries to honour their commitments. In particular, we urge them to do the following.

They should put an end to the wars of occupation and to the plundering of the resources of the countries of the Third World, and should free up at least a part of their millions in military spending so that those resources can be allocated to international assistance for the benefit of sustainable development.

We urge them to cancel the foreign debt of developing countries, which has already been paid more than once. That would release additional resources that could be devoted to economic development and social programmes.

They should honour the commitment to allocate at least 0.7 per cent of their gross domestic product to official development assistance without conditions, so that the countries of the South could use those resources for their national priorities. They should also promote access on the part of poor countries to substantial new financing.

They are urged to devote one fourth of the money that is wasted each year on commercial advertising to food production, which would provide nearly $250 billion more to fight hunger and malnutrition.

They should allocate the money being used for agricultural subsidies in the North to agricultural development in the South. Thus, our countries would have approximately $1 billion per day at their disposal to invest in food production.

We urge them to comply with the commitments set out in the Kyoto Protocol and to establish more ambitious emission-reduction targets beginning in 2012, without seeking to increase restrictions on countries that, even now, maintain far lower per capita emission levels than those of the countries of the North.

They should promote access by Third World countries to technology and should support the training of their human resources. Today, on the other hand, qualified personnel from the South are subjected to unfair competition and incentives resulting from discriminatory and selective migration policies implemented by the United States and Europe.

Something that is today more urgent than ever is the establishment of a democratic and equitable international order and a fair and transparent trading system in which all States can participate, in sovereignty, in the decisions that affect them.

It is our deepest belief that solidarity between peoples and Governments is possible. In Latin America and the Caribbean, the Bolivarian Alternative for the Americas and Petrocaribe have demonstrated this.

The Movement of Non-Aligned Countries has remained faithful to its founding principles. We support the cause of the Palestinian people and their inalienable right to self-determination in an independent and sovereign State, with its capital in East Jerusalem. We support the cause of those other peoples whose sovereignty and territorial integrity is being threatened, like those of Venezuela and Bolivia, and we endorse the right of Puerto Rico to be independent.

We condemn the imposition of unilateral coercive measures in violation of international law and attempts to implant a single model for a political, economic and social system. We object to the negative practice of certifying countries that follows the patterns and interests of the powerful. We strongly oppose political manipulation and the application of double standards in the matter of human rights, and we reject the selective imposition of politically motivated resolutions against the member countries of the Non-Aligned Movement.

The establishment of the Human Rights Council offers the opportunity to open a new era in the promotion of and protection for all human rights for all, on the basis of international cooperation and constructive dialogue. Those who caused the demise of the old Human Rights Commission are now trying to disqualify the Council because they have not been able to bend it to serve their own interests. They refuse to participate in its work in order to escape the scrutiny of the international community within the framework of

the Universal Periodic Review mechanism. The legitimacy of the Council does not depend on the perception that the empire has about its work, but on its capacity to discharge its mandate with the strictest adherence to the principles of universality, objectivity, impartiality and non-selectivity in the treatment of human rights issues.

The Movement of Non-Aligned Countries will continue to defend the interests of the Third World and promote the building of a world which is more just, more democratic and with greater solidarity.

Cuba has had to pay a very high price for the defence of its independence and sovereignty. The heroic Cuban people have endured the longest and cruellest blockade in history, imposed by the most powerful nation on Earth. Despite the fact that this Assembly has repeatedly and resoundingly taken a stand in favour of ending that genocidal policy, the United States Government has not only ignored the will of the international community, but in marked disregard of it has gradually intensified its economic war against Cuba. Never has the foreign policy against a country been armed with such a broad and sophisticated arsenal of aggressive measures in the political, economic, cultural, diplomatic, military, psychological and ideological domains.

Cuba has just been lashed by two intense hurricanes, which have devastated its agriculture, seriously affected part of its infrastructure and damaged or destroyed more than 400,000 homes. Allow me to take advantage of this opportunity, on behalf of the Cuban Government and people, to thank all those countries, organizations and persons who in one way or another have honestly and sincerely contributed with resources or moral support to the reconstruction efforts undertaken by my country. That stands in contrast with the position of the United States Government, which continues to ruthlessly apply the blockade.

Cuba has asked for no gifts from the United States Government. It has simply asked and asked again that it be allowed to purchase in the United States the materials that are indispensable for the reconstruction of homes and the power grid, and that American companies be authorized to grant Cuba private commercial credits to buy food. The answer has been negative and has been accompanied by an attempt to manipulate information in such a manner that the Government of the United States seems to be concerned for the well-being of the Cuban people while the Government of Cuba is perceived as turning down their offer.

If the United States were really so concerned for the Cuban people, the only moral and ethical behaviour would be to lift the blockade imposed on Cuba for five decades, in violation of the most elemental rules of international law and the Charter of the United Nations. That irrational policy has a clear objective: to destroy the process of profound revolutionary transformation undertaken by the Cuban people since 1959 — in other words, to trample on its right to self-determination, wrest away its freedom and its political, economic and social conquests and push it backwards to its former neocolonial status.

The Bush Administration attempts to justify the intensification of its policy against Cuba by turning once more to fraud and deceit, with its characteristic cynicism and hypocrisy. Its determination to dominate and recolonize Cuba is being presented as nothing less than as an endeavour to liberate and democratize.

Who, other than its accomplices, recognizes that the United States Government has any authority in this world in the matter of democracy and human rights? What authority could such a Government claim that hunts down and cruelly mistreats illegal migrants at its southern border, that legalizes the use of torture and keeps in concentration camps — such as the one installed in the territory illegally occupied by the United States base at Guantánamo — people who have not been proved of or even charged with any crime? What respect is due to a Government that attacks the sovereignty of other States, using the excuse of the fight against terrorism, while at the same time guaranteeing impunity to anti-Cuban terrorists? What kind of justice can be promoted by an Administration that illegally keeps imprisoned five Cuban patriots who were only seeking information to neutralize the actions of the terrorist groups operating against Cuba from the United States?

Cuba appreciates the solidarity it has received from the General Assembly in its fight against the blockade and the aggression that it has had to confront for almost five decades. Cuba reaffirms its unyielding decision to defend its sovereignty and independence. Cuba reiterates its will to carry on, together with members of the Non-Aligned Movement, in the battle

for a better world, where the rights of all peoples to justice and development are respected.

To conclude, I would like to recall the words of the Commander-in-Chief of the Cuban Revolution, Comrade Fidel Castro Ruz: "A world without hunger is possible. ... A just world is possible. A new world, which our species eminently deserves, is possible and will become reality."

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the First Vice-President of the Council of State and Ministers of the heroic and supportive Republic of Cuba for the statement he has just made.

Mr. José Ramón Machado Ventura, First Vice-President of the Council of State and Ministers of the Republic of Cuba, was escorted from the rostrum.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): Before adjourning this meeting, I wish to remind members that the opening meeting of the High-level Event on the Millennium Development Goals will take place in the General Assembly Hall tomorrow from 8.45 to 10 a.m. Immediately thereafter, at 10 a.m., the general debate will continue.

The meeting rose at 1.55 p.m.